8-2018

School Library Access as Related to Student Reading Comprehension in an Urban East Tennessee School District

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

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August 2018

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Keywords: economically disadvantaged, free or reduced meals, library access, reading achievement, reading comprehension, socioeconomic status

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of school library access on student reading comprehension as measured by the Easy CBM universal screener test. The population consisted of 5th and 6th grade students enrolled in one intermediate school in an urban school system in East Tennessee. Data were analyzed for the population of the 2016-2017 academic school year. Specifically, this study considered the impact of school library access on students who qualify for free or reduced meals.

A quantitative study was used to find correlations and differences in the reading comprehension data and library checkout data for fifth and sixth grade students who do or do not qualify for free or reduced meals in an urban East Tennessee school district. A quasi-experimental design was selected because preexisting data were collected on 1,003 fifth and sixth grade students enrolled and assessed during the 2016 – 2017 school year. The reading comprehension levels from the Easy CBM universal screener were collected for each of the students in the study. The number of class library visits for each student's language arts teacher as well as the total checkout numbers for each student were also collected for each student in the study.

The results of the study indicated a significant positive correlation in the number of checkouts and class library visits for all students. Results also indicated a significant positive correlation in the number of checkouts for students who qualify for free and reduced meals when these students are taken to the library as part of their language arts instructional block. Additional results of the study indicated a significant positive correlation between the number of books checked out and reading comprehension scores when all students are considered. There was significant difference in the number of books checked out by students who did not qualify for free or reduced meals, with those students checking out approximately one more book than students who do qualify for free or reduced meals. Finally, results of the study indicate a significant difference in reading comprehension scores for student who students who do not

qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do qualify. Students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals scored significantly higher than students who do qualify.

DEDICATION

To my husband Steve,

Every day I thank God for our marriage and your unwavering love and support for me. You have believed in me and encouraged me through every single idea and endeavor I've thrown at you. When I was 19 and wanted to major in English, you helped edit my papers and even snuck into class with me a time or two. When I couldn't find a job with a degree in English and ended up working in insurance, you helped me study for my licensing test and let me sell you an overpriced auto policy. After four years selling insurance I had my own office to manage, but I wanted to drop everything and go back to graduate school to get my Master's degree in teaching. You never once questioned what it would mean for our finances or future. You were just as excited as I was about going back to school to become a teacher. Through 14 hour days of student teaching and grad school assignments, when everyone else got me at my best, you got me at my most exhausted and frustrated. You never complained about any of it. You have helped me decorate classrooms, move classrooms, move schools, and change job roles. When I wanted to extend my maternity leave to spend more time with Erica, you made sure it happened. When I wanted to work on my Ed.S, you never questioned it. You knew it meant spending more money. You knew it meant having to double up on parenting duties while I was a full-time student. You never hesitated. When I wanted to go back to school full-time *again*, for the fourth degree since knowing you, you encouraged me. Knowing the expense, knowing the commitment, but never hesitating. These are just the things that worked out for me – there are countless other ideas that didn't work out, but that you still let me try. When I wanted to open a daycare in our home and you came to state training with me to become a certified childcare provider. When I wanted to open my own insurance agency and you drove around looking at office locations with me in the

wee hours of the night. When I wanted to do pharmaceutical sales and you took two days off from work to drive me to an interview in Nashville just so I wouldn't be by myself. No matter what I have ever wanted to do with my life, you have been by my side, cheering me on, and have never once tried to talk me out of anything or hold me back, or make me think it was silly or unnecessary. Thank you forever and always for letting me be me. Thank you for being my number one. Thank you for being my 24/7 tech support. Thank you for being what I need, always. I love you.

To my daughter Erica,

My sweet girl. Nothing is more important to me than you, but thank you for giving me the time to do this work that is also so important to me. I know you have had to make sacrifices too – for mommy not to cuddle as long some nights, for mommy to miss a family movie, a friend's birthday party, or a playdate. I appreciate your patience, your generous heart, your quick forgiveness, and your love for me. I am overwhelmed by the blessing of being your mother. I love you.

To my mom,

You were my first and most important teacher. I am forever grateful to be the daughter of a true educator, a working woman who showed me that while her own family always comes first, there are other kids out there who need someone who believes in them and who is passionate about teaching them. Thank you for always helping me with my algebra homework after teaching math to middle school kids all day. Thank you for always making sure I always had books to read. Thank you for always cheering me on and for always loving me. If I can be half the mom and educator you are, then I will be immensely proud. I love you.

To my dad,

You have always worked so hard to make sure we were taken care of and had good opportunities. I've always seen you learning, teaching yourself new things, and being curious about the way things work. You have always worked hard to be GREAT whether it's football, your job, or being a dad. You have worked your way through better and better job opportunities, and you always treat people right and help others whenever you can. You are resourceful, committed, and always determined to be working on *something*. I am thankful to have you as a role model who thinks a job worth doing is a job worth doing well. I love you.

To my sister,

I can't believe we are still students. School never came easy to you, but you keep going no matter what. I am so proud of how hard you have worked in nursing school so you can take care of others. Your effort and commitment to taking care of the elderly is inspiring and comes from such a genuine place in your heart. Thank you for encouraging me through school, for letting me vent, for making me laugh, for setting vacation goals and reminding me of them often, and for being my lifetime best friend. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my dissertation committee: Dr. Don Good, Dr. Pamela Scott, Dr. Cecil Blankenship, and Dr. Virginia Foley, chairperson. I am forever grateful for your guidance and feedback during this journey.

Dr. Foley, thank you for always being the voice of reason and having that presence that lets me know everything is going to be ok. Thank you for taking me under your wing, for coming to Boot Camp on your weekends, and for taking my calls and texts far beyond the timeframe of your "office hours." Thank you for your ability to give frank feedback without being judgmental. I appreciate your dedication to education, and I am inspired by your genuine commitment to improving school leaders so they may create a better environment for their students.

Dr. Good, thank you for making me feel like statistics was not something beyond my grasp. I like your passion for problem solving, and I appreciate the way you can explain complex concepts in a way that makes sense. I am grateful for your taking the time to check in on a Saturday at Boot Camp and for taking the time to sit with me and guide me while I ran my data. Most importantly, thank you for your incredible patience.

A special thanks to my ding-dang-gang friends, Chris Feathers and James Jacobs for supporting me through the program, believing in me, and making me laugh. I will never forget the late evenings and early mornings working together before the school day started or after it ended. I loved working with both of you on the middle school internship project, videos, and other assignments. It has been great to have two supportive teammates through this program, and I have learned so much from each of you. You have made me feel smart and capable, and you have made this program infinitely more fun than I ever thought possible. You both never cease to amaze and inspire me. I am grateful for your leadership and friendship.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The threat of a literacy crisis has prevailed in education since the 1980s (Krashen, 2004). For decades, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and other educators have researched best practices to improve student reading achievement and cultivate a love of reading that will transpire into adulthood and result in a well educated society. However, approximately 8.7 million secondary students are unable to read and comprehend material in grade appropriate text books (Gallagher, 2009). Research to support the claim that reading improves reading is well documented. However, funding for print materials as well as librarians and their assistants has faced some of the highest budget cuts documented (Kachel, 2013). Additionally, sustained silent reading time during the school day is sometimes discouraged by teachers and administrators who deem the practice as a waste of instructional time (Gallagher, 2009). While the potential consequences of a looming literacy crisis are obvious, the steps to prevent the issue often go unaddressed: increase student access to print materials and provide students with the time to read.

The state of Tennessee reports that its largest achievement gap in grades 3rd through 8th is in English language arts (TDOE, 2016). Students who qualify for free or reduced meals are far less likely to achieve reading proficiency than their peers who do not qualify for free or reduced meals. Researchers, educators, and policymakers know there is a link between the issues of reading achievement and socioeconomic status. The achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and their noneconomically disadvantaged peers is consistently seen in research and is widely accepted as a major problem in education (Bhattacharya, 2010). With No

Child Left Behind, a focus was placed on these students and school systems were required to be held accountable for the academic achievement of all students in subgroup populations. In Tennessee, approximately 58% of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged (TDOE, 2016). With more than half of Tennessee students qualifying for free or reduced meals, there is an increased focus and awareness of the educational disadvantages for these students, and school systems statewide continue to seek teaching strategies and activities to overcome the setbacks to which economically disadvantaged students are predisposed so that they may be set up for academic success.

Krashen (2013) argued that while teaching strategies and activities such as read alouds may be helpful in leading to an increased interest in reading, the necessary condition for true reading encouragement is access to reading materials. He hypothesized that access to books will result in an increase in free voluntary reading, which will result in literacy development. However, according to Krashen, children who live in poverty have limited access to books and schools or public libraries may be their only source of reading material. Without transportation to a public library, access to the school library becomes paramount for children living in poverty.

Statement of the Problem

Even though the research is clear regarding access to reading materials and its effect on students of low socioeconomic backgrounds, the access itself is not generally a priority for school leaders when considering staffing and budget (Kachel, 2013). However, there is a priority for students in the school to demonstrate proficiency or mastery on reading comprehension achievement tests. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the research on a potential language arts reading comprehension achievement gap as measured by the Easy CBM

assessment with fifth and sixth grade students with regard to access to school library books and socioeconomic status.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions as they related to the effects of library book access on student reading comprehension as measured by the Easy CBM reading assessment.

Research Question 1

Is there a significant correlation between the number of books checked out and the amount of library access?

Research Question 2

Is there a significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student checks out from the school library?

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference between the Easy CBM scores for students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

Significance of the Study

Although teachers are primarily held responsible for student learning, the responsibility of school leaders and the school librarian must also be considered since opportunities for reading and access to reading materials increase student content knowledge in all subject areas (Naylor-Gutierriez, 2013). With the common core expectation of an increased focus on text complexity (Appendix D) and teaching steeped in quality fiction and nonfiction texts, the role of the school library is more important than ever. As teachers have implemented instructional shifts and assessment shifts with the common core state standards, policymakers and administrators must consider paradigm shifts regarding the role of the school librarian and budget priorities. For students to truly become college and career ready, students must be provided with the access they need to be successful. The results of this study may be of interest to teachers, librarians, school administrators, and policymakers. Teachers must be made aware of best practices for their students. The results of the study indicate that whole class library access benefits the students. There is a positive, significant correlation in student reading comprehension and intentionally planned access to the school library, and it is important for teachers and school administrators to consider this information when developing instructional plans and schedules.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are important in this research, the findings, and recommendations for practice and further study.

1. *Access*

   In education, the term access typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure, or at least strive to ensure, that students have equal and equitable

opportunities to take full advantage of their education (The Glossary of Education Reform, March 10, 2014).

In this study, *access* refers to a permission, liberty, or ability to enter, approach, or pass to and from a place or to approach or communicate with a person or thing (*Merriam-Webster*, 2018).

2. *Achievement gap*

   The achievement gap is often defined as the differences between the test scores of minority and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers. Indicators of achievement gaps include performance on tests such as statewide tests and SATs, access to key opportunities such as advanced mathematics and higher education, and attainments such as high school diploma, college degree, and employment (http://www.nea.org/home/20380.htm).

3. *Easy CBM*

   The Easy CBM Reading is a set of measures for assessing early literacy skills from kindergarten to sixth grade. Some of the measures are group administered and some are individually administered. Testing can be administered entirely online. The EasyCBM Reading measures are designed to integrate with a Response to Intervention (RTI) model and provide critical data to your instructional decision making process. Developed by researchers at the University of Oregon, these assessments measure skills in the Common Core State Standards and foundational literacy skills. EasyCBM Reading is comprised of eight curriculum-based measures (CBMs) that assess multiple literacy skills at each grade level with standardized administration and scoring (https://easycbm.com/about.html).

4. *Economically Disadvantaged*

This subgroup includes all students who are directly certified to receive free meals without the need to complete the household application. Homeless, runaway, and migrant children and children from households that receive benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and deemed "categorically eligible" for free school meals and are directly certified. (TDOE, 2018).

5. *Free or Reduced Price Meals*

   Children from families who meet certain income criteria are eligible to receive free or reduced price meals at school. Children can receive free or reduced price meals if the gross income of the household is within the free or reduced limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines (TDOE, 2018). "In the 2016-2017 school year, a household of three earning $26,208 or less would qualify for free school meals, and a family of three earning up to $37,296 would qualify for reduced-price meals" (http://frac.org/school-meal-eligibility-reimbursements).

6. *Literacy*

   Literacy is a collection of skills and communicative practices shared among individuals in society. It is the ability to comprehend and accurately apply the written language forms necessary in society. Literate individuals have mastered the ability to use cognitive processes to comprehend, apply, and reflect on written text (USDOE, 2017).

7. *Low Socioeconomic Status*

   Students who qualified for the free or reduced meals program supported by the U.S. Department of Education compromise the low socioeconomic subgroup for this study.

"A combination of social and economic factors that are used as an indicator of household income and opportunity. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) uses eligibility for the Department of Agriculture's National School Meals Program as a measure of socioeconomic status" (*The NAEP glossary of terms,* p. 6).

8. *Response to Intervention (RTI)*

   Response to Intervention (RTI) is a three-tier approach to early identification and instructional support for students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with a universal screener for all students. Students who are identified as high risk from the results of the screener are provided with interventions at varying levels of intensity to accelerate their learning. In this study, the RTI screener is focused on learning, specifically reading comprehension (www.rtinetwork.org).

9. *Rigor, Rigorous*

   "In education, the term rigor is used to describe instruction, schoolwork, and educational expectations that are academically, intellectually, and personally challenging. Rigorous learning experiences, for example, help students understand knowledge and concepts that are complex, ambiguous, or contentious, and they help students acquire skills that can be applied in a variety of educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives. Rigorous learning environments encourage students to question their assumptions and think deeply, rather than memorize content for the purposes of recalling information," (https://www.edglossary.org/rigor/).

10. *Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)*

    This criterion-referenced testing program has been the state's testing program since 1988 and includes TNReady assessments in math, English language arts, social studies, and

science, as well as alternative assessments like MSAA and TCAP-Alt for students with special needs. (*TDOE,* 2018).

11. *Text Complexity*

    "Text complexity is the inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables; in the Standards, a three-part assessment of text difficulty that pairs qualitative and quantitative measures with reader-task considerations," (*The Common Core State Standards Appendix A*).

12. *TNReady*

    TNReady is a Tennessee-specific test based on the state's expectations for college and career readiness. The test measures students' level of proficiency in language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics (*TDOE,* 2017).

13. *Universal Screener -Screening*

    In the RTI model, universal screening is the primary step in identifying the students who struggle to learn when provided a scientific, evidenced based general education. Universal screening is conducted approximately 3-4 times per school year. Screening measures consist of brief assessments focused on target skills that are highly predictive of future outcomes (www.rtinetwork.org).

Delimitations and Limitations

The population for this study consisted of students in an urban school district in East Tennessee who were fifth or sixth graders during the 2016-2017 academic school year and who had taken the Easy CBM universal screener in the final quarter of the school year. These students were enrolled at one intermediate school in the school system.

A limitation of this study is that a student growth measure from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) in prior school years could not be used due to lack of testing data from the previous school year. State testing was suspended during the 2015-2016 school year due to a cancellation with Measurement Incorporated, the assessment vendor for the state of Tennessee. The data used for this study were based on reading comprehension data only. A further limitation of this study includes a flexible library schedule which changed each quarter of the school year per administration.

The study was delimited by the following factors: The study included all students who were tested with Easy CBM at one intermediate school in an upper East Tennessee school district. The study included students with any allowable test accommodations including extended time, Braille or large print, or the test read aloud to the student. Additionally, data were limited to the 2016-2017 school year. Therefore, results of this study may not necessarily generalize to other grade levels or geographic areas.

Overview of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes a brief introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, delimitations and limitations, and an overview.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to reading achievement, library access, and socioeconomic disadvantages in reading. This chapter includes brief historical overview of the shifts in literacy, the impact of school librarians, access to print literature and free reading, socioeconomic differences, and achievement in literacy and literacy pedagogy, and a summary.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the research methods of the study including the research questions and null hypotheses, population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. The methodology included the gathering of data for the Easy CBM for fifth and sixth grade students tested from 2016-2017 in an upper East Tennessee school system. All fifth and sixth grade students who completed the Easy CBM in the fourth quarter of the 2016-2017 school year were included in the study.

Addressed in this study was the issue of whether or not there is a significant difference in reading comprehension levels of fifth and sixth graders with regard to access to print materials and socioeconomic status. Fifth and sixth grade students were chosen because they are intermediate grade levels with fifth grade classified into the state of Tennessee's 3rd through 5th elementary grade band and sixth grade classified into the 6th through 8th grade band of the middle school classification as determined by the assessment rubrics and blueprints from the Tennessee Department of Education for the 2016-2017 school year (TDOE, 2017).

A quantitative framework was used to examine the possible relationships among print material access, socioeconomic status, and fifth and sixth grade reading comprehension scores on the EasyCBM universal screener. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 provides the conclusions and recommendations for further practice and research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Shifts in Literacy Development

According to the National Institute for Literacy (2008), literacy is a top priority for parents, educators, and policymakers. Literacy is the foundation for which success in all other subjects is rooted, and it is the number one indicator for future college and career success of children (Atwell, 2007; Allington, 2014; Cunningham & Stanarch, 1998; Krashen, 2004, 2011). According to Bond (2011), literacy organizations differ in how they define literacy and the ways it affects people's lives. The National Coalition for Literacy considers literacy to mean the ability to use printed information to function in society and achieve one's goals and potential. The organization Reading is Fundamental stated that there is a significant literacy crisis in America, and they estimated that 25 million children in the United States cannot read proficiently based on an analysis of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores.

The Tennessee Department of Education defines literacy as simply the ability to read and write as a means of communication, but the definition of one who is proficient in literacy is much more complex (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017). While most definitions of literacy include some basis of reading and writing, Bond (2011) claimed that discussions involving literacy implies the way we evaluate how people use their literacy abilities. We must be able to use literacy skills in specific ways in order to be considered literate by society, not just by the measures of a state assessment. For example, being identified as literate is not synonymous with scoring proficient on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program

(TCAP). Literacy is the result of a complex relationship of related skills working together to increase understanding of the world.

Foundational Literacy and Response to Intervention (RTI)

The 2000 National Reading Panel report referred to the five foundational pillars upon which all reading instruction should be based. These building blocks include: phonemic awareness instruction, phonics instruction, fluency instruction, vocabulary instruction, and text comprehension instruction (Killingsworth & Killingsworth, 2010). Within this framework of foundational literacy, fluency is crucial for comprehension (Gormley, et al., 2006). When a reader is not yet fluent, he or she lacks the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper extension which is crucial for comprehension. However, in early or struggling readers, the amount of time and cognitive demands spent on decoding the text leaves little resources for fluency and comprehension to develop. In short, each of the five pillars is nonnegotiable for achieving reading proficiency, and some of these skills will need to be mastered before others can be improved.

Response to Intervention (RTI) was designed to provide students with the reading support they need in the five pillars, as well as to identify learning disabilities that would qualify a child for special education services (Searle, 2010). The RTI framework is comprised of an assessment process, a series of tiered interventions, and a problem solving process. The three components of the framework are designed to work together for an RTI program to function successfully.

The assessment process begins with a universal screener for all students. According to Burns (2008), the most commonly used assessment in RTI is the curriculum-based measurement (CBM). This literacy skills assessment typically requires the student to read three 1 minute

passages and answer multiple choice questions. The results of the screener help identify which students are considered high priority or high risk of falling behind their peers in reading unless interventions are quickly implemented. The assessment process also includes progress monitoring of students who have been identified as needing intervention. This progress monitoring provides continuous feedback about the success of the interventions (rtinetwork.org).

The tiered interventions are the second component of the RTI framework. Once students have been identified by the assessment screener, the teacher is provided with research-based intervention strategies that range from whole group strategies to intensive strategies for an individual student or small group of students (Searle, 2010). The tiered interventions are leveled into three tiers (Appendix C). Tier 1 is considered to be schoolwide interventions also known as best classroom practices. Approximately 80% to 90% of students receive Tier 1 instruction. Students receiving only Tier 1 instruction have been identified as "low risk" based on the results of the universal screener. Tier 2 is considered targeted interventions for students who have been identified as having "some risk" based on the results of the universal screener. This tier is comprised of approximately 5% to 10% of students. The final and most intense tier, Tier 3, is for students who have been identified as "high risk" by the universal screener. This tier is comprised of approximately 1% to 5% of students who need intensive specialized interventions (Searle, 2010).

The third component of RTI is the problem solving model which relies on a team of educators who are trained to analyze the needs of individual learners (Searle, 2010). Typically, the team meets regularly to customize intervention plans that are appropriate for both students and educators. While this piece of the RTI framework is time consuming, Searle (2010) credits it

for creating a deep commitment to students from those involved in the planning and development of effective interventions.

According to Burns (2008), one of the main objectives in RTI is for all students to achieve proficiency in reading fluency and comprehension. For middle grades students, successful implementation of RTI can mean gains in achievement and reduction in special education numbers. However, for RTI to be successful, educators must commit to all three components of the framework. Research by the Tennessee Department of Education (2016) labeled many RTI initiatives as "checkbox implementation" meaning the full commitment to the three components were not taking place in most schools. The researchers suggested that RTI would not be successful if only implemented at face value, but success would come if RTI was paired with strong data analysis at the district level, deep understanding of the content standards and skills, and shared ownership of student needs (TDOE, 2016).

Foundational Literacy and Reading Instruction

Arlington (2011) argued that no matter how much instruction students receive in the five pillars, if they do not apply what they have learned in the context of real reading, they will not improve as much as they could. The work in the five pillars of literacy must go hand in hand with the reading of authentic texts rather than texts produced for teaching skills. An urgency to teach isolated skills can produce temporary success in the short term but will not help struggling readers over time. In 2016, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) implemented the Read to Be Ready Initiative to stress the idea that reading must be taught to learn about new ideas and enhance knowledge rather than just sounding out words (TDOE, 2016). This initiative, focused on kindergarten through fifth grades was implemented based on assessment data and

feedback from teachers that students in the elementary grades struggle to read. State assessment results have shown an improvement in all subjects over the past several years except in English language arts for grades 3 through 6 where scores have either remained steady or declined. In fact, English language arts is the only tested subject with less than half of the state's students earning a proficient score. Nationally, only one third of fourth grade students in Tennessee receive a proficient reading score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Each year, approximately half of the third grade students in the state of Tennessee finish the school year without becoming readers (TDOE, 2016). The goal of Read to be Ready is that 75% of Tennessee third graders will be proficient in reading by 2025. To reach this goal, the state department recommends strategies such as supporting deeper literacy instruction and improving RTI^2 implementation.

Beyond the five foundational pillars, the Reading Language Arts portion of the TCAP measures a student's ability to read closely and perform a deep literary analysis of a text (TDOE, 2016). Students succeed when reading skills and strategies are taught in conjunction with meaningful texts rather than in test preparation methods honed in on an isolated skill or standard (Corwin, 2018) (Appendix D). To be considered proficient, students must demonstrate a deep understanding of an author's craft in the development of literary texts, and students must also prove their competency and capability of literary analysis in both fiction and nonfiction texts. However, researchers from the Tennessee Department of Education found that students spend a minimal amount of time actually reading and being engaged with a text (TDOE, 2016). Furthermore, the researchers found that only about half of the texts teachers used for instruction were appropriately complex for grade level. The questions and tasks used with these texts were focused on recalling information rather than analyzing the author's craft, concepts, and

vocabulary. The TDOE theorized that students are not showing growth in their reading assessment scores because students are not focusing on strategies to understand a text for the purposes of building their content knowledge. The researchers argued that this is increasingly important for economically disadvantaged students who generally have limited experiences to develop strong vocabulary skills and content knowledge outside of school. The proficiency rates of the students who qualify for free or reduced meals are half of those of their peers who do not qualify for free or reduced meals.

According to Grote-Garcia and Ortlieb (2016), fundamental reading skills are necessary for the development of content knowledge in both academic and nonacademic contexts, meaning the foundational pillars must be in place before students can develop the content knowledge necessary for literary analysis and other subject areas. However, if these skills are taught in isolation, transfer of knowledge or building of content knowledge is unlikely to occur (TDOE, 2016). Effective reading instruction should integrate the foundational skills with rich texts so that decoding instruction is combined with opportunities to demonstrate fluency with a carefully selected text. This integration of skills based competencies and knowledge based competencies are what the Tennessee Department of Education theorizes will grow all readers regardless of socioeconomic status.

Additionally, assessment blueprints provided by the Tennessee Department of Education outline the expectation for students to reach proficiency or mastery in multiple modes of writing including narrative, opinion-argument, and informational-explanatory when writing to a prompt based on one to three texts that may be either fiction or nonfiction. Students must also demonstrate proficiency or mastery in the areas of speaking and listening skills, and appropriate use of grammar and a grade level command of the English Language. Finally, simply to be

considered literate in the 21st century, the National Governors Association (2010) included the criteria of: Improved reading comprehension and critical reading; information processing, research skills, and critical thinking; digital and cultural literacies.

In literacy education, the criteria of the five pillars are referred to as skills based competencies (Killingsworth & Killingsworth, 2010). These are the skills one needs to read, process, and understand what has been written. The criteria for literary analysis and beyond are referred to as knowledge based competencies, referring to the standards set forth by the common core and, in this research, adapted in 2016 by the state of Tennessee to become the Tennessee State Standards (Corwin, 2016). The idea of skills based competencies and knowledge based competencies have been referred to as "reading wars" among literacy experts (TDOE, 2016). The philosophical argument between the two competencies can be identified by those who advocate reading should be taught by learning phonemes and sounds which are then matched to spelling patterns (skills based competencies) or by those who advocate reading should be taught with frequent exposure to print materials and a focus on sight words (knowledge based competencies). The idea of balanced literacy instruction is that which blends instruction from the five pillars and includes an emphasis on reading to build content knowledge and critical thinking.

Common core standards for English Language Arts are based on three key instructional shifts which teachers should consider as the basis for all curriculum development and assessment (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010). The shifts include: Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction, reading and writing grounded in text evidence, and regular practice with complex texts and academic language (Corwin, 2017). The standards themselves include both grade level and cornerstone expectations for reading, writing, language, and speaking and listening. The key shifts are rooted in early literacy research that documented a relationship

between a decline in quality literature or text complexity and low SAT scores (Chall, Conrad, & Harris-Harpies, 1991). This research stemmed from Chall's 1967 and 1983 research that separated the reading process in stages of learning to read vs. reading to learn which would be congruent with the reference to skills based competencies versus knowledge based competencies in present time.

The first key shift, Building Knowledge Through Content-rich Nonfiction, is paramount for students to build a knowledge base about the world as well as a reservoir of strong vocabulary terms (Alberti, 2013). A focus on the nonfiction genre in the English Language Arts classroom is recent, and it is the area for which most English Language Arts teachers lack materials. In fact, fewer than 10 percent of elementary English Language Arts texts are nonfiction (Duke, 2004).

The second shift, Reading and Writing Grounded in Evidence, is meant to get students to hone their analytical skills and include well-selected text evidence to support their interpretations and claims. The goal of this shift is to help students be college and career ready, something previous teaching which included writing based on student experience and personal opinions, would not help them achieve (Alberti, 2013).

For the third shift, Regular Practice with Complex Texts and Academic Language, the key focus is on comprehending complex texts in order to prepare for the rigorous reading in college academia. Regular access to complex texts is paramount for this shift to be successful (Corwin, 2017). An implementation dip in achievement data is to be expected with new standards and a new assessment, but the lack of access to complex texts is creating a further divide in the achievement rates of students who do have access to high-quality literature

compared to students who do not. As for what constitutes a complex text, the state of Tennessee uses the qualitative and quantitative measuring tools suggested by the Common Core.

The Role of Text Complexity

According to Corwin (2017), to justify the complexity of a text, one must satisfy the requirements of the text analysis using qualitative and quantitative measures. The measures serve as a tool to ensure students read sophisticated texts which will improve their reading comprehension. The quantitative evaluation of a text looks at readability levels most often measured by Lexile Level (Appendix F). A Lexile Level is the level at which a student can read with a 75% comprehension rate. The Lexile Level measurement is determined by factors such as word frequency, sentence length, text cohesion, and word length (Common Core Standards Initiative, Appendix A, 2010). TNCore training lead by regional trainers from the Tennessee Department of Education recommend the quantitative evaluation happen before the qualitative evaluation (Appendix E). This Tennessee Department of Education suggested protocol is to help document that the text complexity rises throughout the grade levels.

The quantitative measure used by Tennessee, developed by the Common Core, suggests reading levels for groups of students in predetermined grade bands which are then categorized with corresponding Lexile Levels (Appendix F). Students are expected to read texts of the level of complexity as identified by their grade level band. For example, students in grades fourth through fifth should be reading books with a Lexile Level between 640L and 850L with a stretch Lexile Level range from 740L through 1010L. Students in grades sixth through eighth should be reading books with a Lexile Level between 860L and 1010L with a stretch Lexile Level range

from 925L through 1185L. The “stretch” Lexile bands are included to encourage students to have regular practice with more rigorous texts for college and career readiness Corwin, 2017).

The qualitative evaluation of texts happens after the quantitative analysis and is designed so that teachers analyze the structure of the text, the convention of the language, and the need for students to have a certain level of background information before understanding the text (Appendix G). This measure of a text is based on four qualitative dimensions: purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands such as life experiences, cultural knowledge, literary knowledge, subject matter knowledge and intertextuality. Tennessee state training (TNCore training) suggests that the qualitative analysis happen after frequent professional conversation and comparison with other texts (Corwin, 2017). The qualitative measure helps to ensure that the quality of texts increase as students progress through the grade levels. The qualitative measuring process also provides a process for documentation when collaborating about text exceptions. After completing a thorough qualitative text analysis, teachers should ideally be able to justify a text selection that may be quantitatively below grade level (Appendix H, I).

According to Corwin (2017), it is necessary to use both qualitative and quantitative measures when selecting a text because the content of a younger grade level book may not be appropriate for elementary children. Likewise, some books with high Lexile Levels are still appropriate for teaching in lower grade levels. For example, Louisa May Alcott’s famous book *Little Women* has a Lexile Level of 460, aligning it with the Common Core suggested grade band of second to third. However, its qualifying measures such as historical background knowledge required and emotional topics would it make it well-suited for a higher grade band. Another example would be in looking at a technical text such as *The Ultimate Lego Book* by DK

Publishing has a Lexile Level of 1110 as compared to Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* which has a Lexile Level of 730. Furthermore, some texts written in verse or in technical language cannot be measured by Lexile Level and are classified by the Lexile Level Code "NP" or "non-prose." The qualitative measure ensures that books written in a format other than prose are still valuable and suitable for instruction.

In addition to the two Lexile Measures, the National Governors Association (2010), explained that the text must be matched to the reader and the task. For example, student engagement, motivation for reading, and type of reading task must be considered. Beyond these criteria for text selection, the National Governors Association and the Tennessee Department of Education stipulated that students should be reading authentic texts beyond what is available to them in a textbook. Teachers are encouraged to scour the internet for current news articles, or use both classic and new novels, or find a biography or autobiography written about a prominent figure in history, politics or science (Corwin, 2017). Once teachers have determined a potential text, the state department recommends a thorough analysis of quantitative and qualitative measures to be completed collaboratively by teachers before the consideration of the student's task (Appendix E). The potential is both exciting and intimidating for teachers of literacy. Teachers are fueled by the chance to share a significant literary piece with their students, but they are intimidated by the amount of time and the text selection process, not to mention the lack of budget for purchasing reading materials beyond the textbook (Subel, 2016). A school librarian can play a key role in this process. With a vast knowledge of young adult literature, the school librarian can make recommendations based on a the popularity of a book, its award status, themes, topics, character development, historical connections, text structure, and so forth.

For a text to be selected for use in the English Language Arts classroom, the measurement process is intentional and time consuming. Professional development from the state department, TNCore, has been offered to teachers, school leaders, and district leaders since 2012 to help teachers understand the text selection process. In order for students to understand the complex texts they are assigned, they must develop the vocabulary skills and decoding processes necessary. Common Core separates vocabulary expectations into three tiers: Tier 1 words are basic vocabulary words most children will know. Tier 1 words include high-frequency words that are usually not multiple meaning words. Tier 2 words are less familiar vocabulary words found in written text and shared in conversation. Words in Tier 2 may be more precise forms of familiar words and are often referred to as "rich vocabulary." Tier 3 words are referred to as "domain-specific" words which are critical to understanding the academic content taught in schools. Tier 3 words are low-frequency and are limited to specific knowledge domains (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010). The level of vocabulary in a text used for instruction is one of the key factors in determining whether it is rigorous enough for students. Teachers are discouraged at the state, school, and district levels from using any resources or materials that do not meet the criteria for rigorous reading as determined by the suggested qualitative and quantitative measures of the Common Core State Standards (Corwin, 2017).

This process of analyzing and classifying what should be considered rigorous reading and instruction helped draw attention to the gap in skills based competencies and knowledge based competencies (Arlington, 2013). According to Arlington, schools should provide high-quality reading lessons, but without the proper reading support, certain texts are just too difficult for children to comprehend. According to the National Governors Association (2010), The Common Core should function as a spiraling curriculum that integrates a focus on conceptual

understandings and procedures starting in the elementary grades, enabling teachers to take time for key concepts and giving students opportunities to master them. However, Krashen (2013) argued that the recent changes to language arts education actually work against access to books and reading time, and consequently working against the development of literacy.

According to the Common Core Standards Initiative (2010), classroom instruction in English Language Arts should always be taught through a rigorous text. However, state training for the text complexity and text selection process did not occur in the First Tennessee region until June 2013 (Greene, 2015). Teachers were also to develop and ask challenging text-based questions, as well as provide students with analytical opportunities and text-based writing practice (Greene, 2015). According to Alberti (2012), one of the greatest risks we faced during the Common Core implementation process was rapid implementation with minimal understanding of what was required for a successful change. Not only were teachers unprepared for the shifts and expectations of common core, but many of the students reaching their classroom doors had not yet mastered the five pillars of early literacy: phonemic awareness (letter names, phoneme segmenting), phonics (letter sounds), fluency (word and passage reading fluency), vocabulary, and reading comprehension which are nonnegotiable to reading development (Killingsworth & Killingsworth, 2010).

Foundational Literacy Gaps and Text Based Instruction

According to the Council for Exceptional Children (2006), for children who have not mastered the five foundational pillars, the appropriate reading material is a key piece of reading intervention success. Reading material for improving comprehension should be relatively short and should contain a complete idea or narrative. For students at the fourth grade level, the

passage should be approximately 123 to 153 words (Gormley, et al., 2006). However, following these guidelines contradicted the key shifts and text complexity recommendations of Common Core and the Tennessee State Standards. Without mastery of the five foundational pillars teachers have nothing to build on, so they had to press on knowing the students were not ready, or they decided to risk already limited instructional time to go back and attempt to close as many gaps as possible.

In 2013, as the disconnect between skills based competencies and knowledge-based competencies became more evident and more problematic, the Tennessee State Board of Education adopted Response to Intervention (RTI). According to Fuchs, Fuchs, and Zumeta (2008), the goal of RTI is designed to provide struggling students with intensive tutoring *before* they fail in the regular classroom. In a typical RTI setting, small group tutoring is driven by universal screener data and individual goals for student achievement for those students who were identified by the screener as needing Tier 2 or Tier 3 reading instruction (Fuchs, et al., 2008). This additional support happens beyond the regular or Tier 1 language arts period. To qualify for the intervention all students take the universal screening assessment. In reading, the assessment measures the five foundational pillars of early literacy, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (Grigorenko, 2008). The universal screener is typically administered to students four times a year, and the results of the screener are used to place students in the appropriate instructional tier. Students can move fluidly through the instructional tiers with the final goal being Tier 1, meaning they are ready for the academic demands of the grade level of the regular academic class.

However, teachers at the middle school level are not seeing this additional RTI instruction bridge the gap from skills as foundational as comprehension to skills as complex as

rich literary analysis (Fuchs, et al., 2010). In fact, there are no statistically significant effects on fluency and comprehension measures for middle school students receiving RTI support. Furthermore, the Tier 2 intervention did not improve the chances of passing the state assessment for Reading Language Arts (Fuchs, et al., 2010). Reading intervention at the middle school level may require different strategies from those at the elementary level given that by middle school, most academic deficits have been established and identified in earlier years.

The introduction to the Tennessee English Language Arts standards specifically states, "When learning the standards for one grade level readers must read the standards in the previous and subsequent grades and understand how that immediate grade fits into the students' overall development. Additionally, the standards are a progression, and teachers will need to assess student understanding of and build on the previous years' standards as they implement the standards for their current grade" (Tennessee State Standards for English Language Arts, p. 2). Therefore, students who were beyond elementary school when the standards were adopted, may not be equipped to spiral up to the standards-based expectation of their current grade level. The design of the standards is set up as, "the focus in elementary is on the foundational skills married with the reading skills. Middle school solidifies the foundation and continues to build reading stamina with increasingly complex literature and literary nonfiction, and the high school standards focus on the students' ability to recognize archetypal patterns, nuances of language, and intertextual connections" (p. 25). The timing of the implementation of the standards means that some students did not learn the strong foundation that was meant to be laid in the early years of this standard design. In aspiring to show proficiency or mastery at the current grade level, and in addition to making up for a lack of skills based competencies, teachers must also assess and build on any missing links of knowledge based competencies.

To add to the challenge of adopting new standards and to further widen the instructional gap, students who were in middle or high school from approximately 2010 to 2017 were elementary students during the Common Core reform and the implementation of the key shifts (Naylor-Gutierrez, 2013). During this time the measurement for proficient reading was determined per the Tennessee Department of Education by using student progress on state reading assessments that were based on State Performance Indicator (SPI) standards. The text complexity requirement was not a part of those standards, and carefully selected and analyzed texts were not a prerequisite for planning or instruction in the English Language Arts classroom (Alberti, 2012). Prior to the adoption of Common Core and its instructional shifts for English Language Arts, many elementary teachers taught their students to "search and find" a text for key ideas or answers to questions. At this time, speed and efficiency was prioritized in order to move quickly through the standards and ensure all concepts were covered before the spring state assessments.

In contrast, the shifts of common core required a close read and a deep analysis (Alberti, 2012). The "search and find" students arrived at the middle and high school levels of a series of standards that were designed to work by spiraling cornerstone standards in kindergarten to twelfth grade. As Alberti explained, the Common Core expectation to implement quality text based questions requires a close reading and deep understanding of a text rather than the low level *search and find* questions which require students to simply skim and scan a text. However, these middle and upper grade students were already in the fifth through twelfth grades by the time the standards were mandated, meaning they never got the cornerstone foundation in their kindergarten to fourth grade years.

In research lead by the Tennessee Department of Education (2016), declining trends in reading assessment data indicated the possibility that the reading instruction received by students in the elementary years has not been sufficient enough to prepare them for the vocabulary and critical thinking demands of the secondary years. As the students continue to move through their academic years, the expectation of rigor increases toward the goal of college and career readiness. Yet, the students who have not yet compensated for the early years find themselves struggling to achieve success and instead find themselves further behind their peers (Grote-Garcia & Ortlieb, 2016). Each year, the gap for struggling students widens, and teachers and administrators implement strategies with interventions such as tutoring, incentives, and more work revolved around reading in order to try to catch students up to grade level expectations. Teachers try to find the grade level in the scaffolded standards where the gap took place, but with no testing data due to flawed assessment platforms and inconsistent state assessment vendors, it becomes a professional guess at best based on classroom observation and locally produced assessments.

There is a sense of urgency to prevent further gaps as teachers try to compensate for previous school years while still teaching their own grade level standards to prevent even further gaps the next year. The Tennessee Department of Education (2016) recommended that teachers support deeper literacy instruction to ensure that students learn decoding within the context of broader comprehension skills. The department clarified that they never intended for the cessation of decoding instruction in the early grades, rather an instructional shift be made to teach decoding in a contextualized way that would allow students to apply skills with real texts and engage in complex words and ideas. Researchers from the TDOE (2016) explained that with regular implementation of this instructional shift, which required constant interaction with

authentic texts, students would develop reading skills as well as an ability to think critically and improve their overall reading experience. Miller (2009) claimed that students who do not read regularly become weaker readers with each passing year. Students who read more become strong readers which causes further widening of the achievement gap (Stanovich, 2017). Tennessee data indicates that students who are behind in reading by the end of the third grade will rarely compensate for lost ground over the next several academic years (TDOE, 2016).

In the Tennessee Department of Education's 2013 study of third grade state reading assessment data, almost 6,000 students were classified into the below basic category, the lowest of four possible categories. Of those students, only a third improved to the next category, basic, on their fifth grade state reading assessment, and less than three percent met the grade level expectation of proficiency. None of the original 6,000 below basic scoring students achieved the advanced classification. Additionally, students who achieve a below basic reading score on their eighth grade reading assessment only have an eight percent chance of meeting the college readiness expectation on the ACT reading test (TDOE, 2016). Without serious intervention, early struggling readers will likely continue to fall behind their peers.

Reading initiatives and schedule changes happen at rapid rates as administrators and district officials frantically try to find a solution to compensate for the missing link which will ensure all students achieve grade level reading expectations (Fuchs, et. al., 2010) (Naylor-Gutieriez, 2013). In a statewide Tennessee Department of Education survey, 106 school districts placed reading as one of their highest priorities (TDOE, 2016). Districts across the state reported implementing strategies such as scheduling a daily reading block, hiring literacy coaches to support teachers, and prioritizing reading interventions over math interventions. Additionally, teachers focus their efforts on small groups of struggling readers as they are at risk of failing

state assessments. Miller (2009) argued that efforts made to bring developing readers up to grade level expectations uses a disproportionate amount of the resources in a school.

Grote-Garcia and Ortlieb (2016) explained the changes in the literacy support over the last two decades as literacy priorities have evolved. Language arts teachers may not be renewed or may be reassigned to nontested grade levels or content areas based on one year of low assessment data. Instructional coaches and reading specialists are hailed or discredited based on various interpretations of the assessment data. Educators and administrators alike are quick to accuse the addition of the written essay, find fault in a previously adopted material, or question whether a teacher differentiated for her students. In reality, rather than making drastic changes to personnel or curriculum, the one research based strategy proven to improve reading scores is to provide students with the time and access to books (Krashen, 2013).

It is this lack of time and access to books that Krashen (2013) posited are the effects of recent changes to language arts education that are working against true literacy development. Krashen accused the common core initiative of ignoring the poverty factor, leaching funds from libraries, and discouraging free reading. His solution to creating a positive impact on literacy is to provide students with a better library. A library which includes a large variety of books combined with a credentialed librarian and certified staff, directly correlates with higher reading scores.

Impact of School Librarians on Literacy

The shift in literacy instruction spotlights the importance of school librarians and provides an opportunity for these professionals to become a part of language arts instruction and opens the potential for them to become instructional leaders in their school. Naylor-Gutierrez

(2013) pointed out that schools have barely tapped the potential of their librarians and the ways librarians can contribute to improving literacy. Beyond checking out books and cataloging inventory, the librarian can assist language arts teachers in text selection and access. Furthermore, the librarian can assist in teaching lessons on correct citations, organizational skills, and effective notetaking. These lessons may be overlooked or sacrificed for time in the regular language arts classroom. However, Todd (2003) noted these are critical skills that students need in order to take ownership of their research and learn how to locate and evaluate credible, reliable information. These skills are crucial to preparing our students to be readers in college and in their careers.

The common core shifts require a balance between literary and informational reading (Naylor-Gutierrez, 2013). Since the focus on nonfiction texts has become a recent priority with the common core shifts, the demand for engaging, rigorous, grade level appropriate nonfiction materials has substantially increased in schools. The school librarian's knowledge of young adult literature is not only invaluable in increasing student motivation and providing book recommendations, it is also academically necessary in order to make and promote the right selections. Naylor-Guiterrez explained that the knowledge of the librarian combined with increased class visits to the library provide students with the access to the rich print materials they need to apply the text based key shifts in literacy.

The librarian also serves as a role model for reading by sharing a knowledge of books that have been read for enrichment or enjoyment rather than for a mandated grade requirement. Miller (2009) explained that even with an extensive classroom library, she still takes her student to the library at least every 2 weeks so they can learn how to navigate through the collection of books and experience an environment where book related conversations occur outside of the

classroom. These practices help the students see reading as something beyond an academic expectation but rather for enjoyment and interest.

Kachel (2013) reported that a full time school librarian consistently improves state assessment scores in reading and writing. The study, based on schools in Philadelphia, compared public schools in multiple counties. At the time of the study more than half of Philadelphia's public schools were without library services, and 56% of the schools in the state of Pennsylvania did not have a full time librarian. During the 2012-2013 school year, only 17% of the schools in the state's largest district had professional librarians.

The Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA) conducted a study to investigate inequalities among districts in order to understand the impact of these inequalities on student achievement. The significant findings of the study concluded that students in schools with a full time librarian had consistently higher scores on reading and writing state assessments, especially writing. Additionally, students identified in sub groups of economically disadvantaged, black, Hispanic, and students with disabilities, benefited more than general education students. For black and Hispanic students, access to more books and school librarians doubled their chances for achieving "Advanced" writing scores and cut their risk of "Below Basic" writing scores in half (Kachel, 2013). For all students in the study, those who attended a school with a full time librarian were almost three times as likely to score "Advanced" in writing as students in schools without libraries staffed with full time librarians. Kachel reported that in fact, not only did reading and writing scores improve, but improvement was seen from elementary, to middle and high school, with growth in "Advanced" scores improving from middle to high school. This study shows potential for significant impact in student achievement for schools and districts that prioritize funding for students to have access to a full time librarian. Yet, when budget cuts

happen, the school librarian is often considered to be negotiable. If the librarian position is not cut completely, he or she may be asked to teach related arts or elective classes, taking away opportunities for students to access the professional help and quality materials needed to improve their reading and writing skills. Ironically, district and school leaders who opt to cut or reconfigure the librarian role are often the same group of leaders searching for solutions for ways to increase reading scores. Todd (2014) argued that the vision for the library program must be matched to agenda and priorities of the stakeholders. If a librarian position is cut or reconfigured due to budget constraints, then by default, student reading has become less a priority than scheduling demands or whatever else for which the budget was allotted.

A recent Scholastic study conducted about the effectiveness of school libraries highlighted statistics from 19 states and one province that have demonstrated the benefits school libraries and library media specialists have on student achievement. Some notable statistics from this study include that students from Alaska's secondary schools with full time librarians increased their likelihood of scoring average or above average on the California Achievement Test (CAT) by almost twice that of students in schools without full time librarians (Lance, 1999). In Delaware, data showed that 98.2% of students had been helped by their school librarian in their learning process, with students in third through fifth grades being helped strongly in developing their reading interests, finding stories, improving reading abilities, and generally enjoying reading more (Todd, 2006). In Indiana, the data from the Scholastic research revealed that the tenure and capabilities of a school's library media specialist is a strong predictor of student proficiency in language arts development. Sixth grade students score well above average on all portions of the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) when the school's librarian has been employed full time at the same school for at least three years

(Callison, 2004). Further research on Indiana schools indicated that across multiple grade level, Indiana students preformed better on state tests when principals met regularly with the librarian, had the librarian serve on school committees, and valued collaborative efforts between teachers and librarians (Lance, Rodney, & Russell, 2007).

According to Todd, Gordon, and Lu (2011) school librarians are virtual masters at matching readers to correct texts. The school librarian possesses a level of expertise that students need when they are searching for the right piece of literature. In the middle school level, this expertise is extremely valuable as students are not fully aware of the characteristics of all genres, and they have not quite decided their literary preferences. The librarian can make suggestions for books the students may not otherwise have selected. By prompting the student to open up and describe interests, the guidelines of a particular project, or previous favorite reads, the librarian can connect the student with a book that is age appropriate and engaging. This interaction with the student is crucial in developing a positive relationship with reading. With more access to qualified librarians, students learn to articulate their needs and develop self-efficacy – two important skills for becoming college and career ready.

Gordon and Todd (2012) examined how the instructional practices of school librarians align with the key shifts in learning of the Common Core State Standards. They posited that a school library with the support of a school librarian is a nonnegotiable need in 21st century education. They elaborated by explaining the ability of the school librarian to help students synthesize information and use raw material to build their content knowledge. The librarian is quickly able to fluctuate among working with individual students, small groups, mixed grade level groups, or whole classes. The librarian tutors, teaches, makes suggestions, and helps students organize materials and research. Todd (2014) explained that librarians can be

particularly supportive in navigating the pressures related to curriculum reform. Additionally, the school librarian helps teachers in selecting professional development or teaching materials. As described by Koechlin, Loertscher, and Zunan (2008), the school library is no longer a warehouse for books and equipment. It is the "Learning Commons" of the entire school and an important extension of the classroom.

Also highlighted in the CISSL study (2012), was the student perceptions of the effect of libraries and staff on their achievement. In a survey of third through twelfth graders, 99.4% of the student surveyed believed their school libraries and library related services helped them to become better learners (Gordon & Todd, 2012). This study was also replicated in Delaware and produced similar results. In the Delaware study, students valued the school librarian as a teacher, particularly when the librarian was providing assistance with independent research, judging the quality of information, and helping to assist and analyze information (*Scholastic*, 2008). The students, whom are publicly declared to be at the root of all educational policymaker decisions, are voicing that a school library led by a professional librarian, helps improve their learning and helps the build knowledge.

Beyond student voice and rise in achievement, the school librarian can be an integral part of a collaborative school culture. The librarian can help teachers problem solve, troubleshoot, provide training, and develop content specific professional development opportunities (Gordon, et. al, 2011). The school library can be a place for teachers to hone their technological skills, learn new software and programs, and discover ways to increase student engagement through cutting edge digital applications. The librarian can also work with teachers on fundraising opportunities such as the book fair, or help the teacher set up communication opportunities

between the students and authors or illustrators. All of these possibilities enhance learning and collaboration which are two key elements in a healthy school culture.

Access to Print Literature and Free Reading

In research by Scholastic Publishing (2008), the impact of traditional school libraries on student achievement was studied. The results of the study revealed that students with higher test scores correlated with the size of the school library staff including full time school librarians, the frequency of library centered instruction and collaboration between librarians and teachers, the size or currency of library collections, and school library spending.

Krashen (2013) argued that students will not find their voices as members of a democratic society if they do not have access to books and the time to read. He advocated that young people like to read if they are provided with ample access to interesting texts, a relaxed environment, and little to no evaluation. In the ever changing landscape of academic standards and assessment, we are forgetting the most critical requirement for reading and literacy which is access to good books for independent reading. Krashen (2004) revealed that students who did not have a school library read approximately half the number of books per week as students who did have a school library.

At its core, independent reading, or free reading, is leisure reading that is done voluntarily and independently. Krashen (2004) claimed that free reading is the most effective tool for learning to read. He advocated for and cites research to support that free reading not only increases one's ability to read and write, it also strengthens fluency, spelling, comprehension, speed, and syntax, as well as providing reading motivation and promoting a true love of reading.

Developing a love of reading is something that reluctant readers will not cultivate without support (Miller, 2009). With a high demand of the teacher's attention for small group or struggling readers, comes a distraction from a large group of capable, yet reluctant readers. These reluctant readers are also known as "dormant readers", those who can read, but lack the interest. These dormant readers are allowed to get by without reading because their test scores are not low enough to warrant extra attention from the teacher. These students do their reading assignments without complaint, but they do not read on their own time outside of school. A librarian can provide the support and inspiration for these dormant readers to view reading as an enjoyable experience rather than a chore.

Gallagher (2009) presented three steps to building a reader. These three steps include a selection of interesting books, time to read the books inside of school, and a place to read their books. The librarian supports these three steps and provides opportunities free voluntary reading, and research shows the more people read, the better readers they become (Krashen, 2004). Students need the choice, the opportunities, and the safe place to work through the process of learning to identify what they need from a book or resource. Now, with the stress of high stakes testing and the need for constant close reading and in depth analysis, students feel they do not have the time to spend on selecting or books on topics that may interest them (Gallagher, 2009). Students and their teachers are too concerned with choosing a book that will help them get to a finished product such as a completed test, project, or presentation.

According to Gallagher (2009), students need the valuable practice of making a choice and the reflection time to acknowledge that maybe they did choose the wrong book, but they can go back to the library and choose again without consequence or judgment, without putting themselves behind on an assignment. Reading does not have to be synonymous with work, but in

our schools, we insist there be some assessment proving the reading happened. When educators insist that reading come with a post reading product, students begin to view the reading itself as a chore rather than something done for pleasure. When students get home or when they have free time, reading does not appeal as an option because of the mindset that it is not enjoyable. Miller (2009) explained that reading has become synonymous with schoolwork. There are so many assignments and stipulations attached to reading that students never develop the art of reading for pleasure which means they are not motivated to read beyond the classroom as students or adults.

Evidence for the relationship between free reading and literacy development comes partially from students in language arts classes who have time set aside for self-selected reading. Krashen (2004) revealed that, in 51 out of 54 comparisons, students who participated in free reading did as well or better on reading tests than students who were given traditional reading instruction. The students who participated in free reading consistently outperformed students in similar classes that do not include self-selected reading time on tests of reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar.

Gordon and Todd (2012) explained that school libraries provide an even playing field for students identified in subgroups. Specifically, students who are considered to be socioeconomically disadvantaged often have limited or no access to print reading materials or digital devices.

Socioeconomic Differences and Literacy Development

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 brought increased attention to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds as policymakers and educators began to focus on the achievement gap between these students and their middle to upper class peers. The impact of low

socioeconomic status on literacy proficiency is widely attributed to the lack of print materials students to which low socioeconomic status children have access. Case histories from those who grew up in poverty but had access to print materials, credit their school success and literacy proficiency to self-selected reading (Krashen, 2013). Children who live at or below the poverty line have limited access to books at home and have little to no bookstores in their neighborhoods (Constantino, 2005). For these children, school libraries, classroom libraries, and public libraries may be their only source of reading material. Krashen (2013) claimed that children will not continue to perform well on reading assessments unless they have acquired the required competencies through reading outside of school. He acknowledged that educators and policymakers agree that reading is good for kids, but pointed out that funding for libraries has been steadily decreasing over recent years. Subel (2016) referred to a school without a book budget as a grave disservice to students and learning. Krashen (2013) also declared the correlation between living in poverty and decreased access to books is rarely included in discussions about ways to improve reading scores.

Constantino (2005) presented the results of a study which examined the access of books to children ages 7 to 12 in six Los Angeles communities. Surveys were administered to examine access to books in the homes, classrooms, schools, and communities of the children. In Beverly Hills, the most affluent neighborhood community in the study, there was a median income of $121,000, and there were five local bookstores within the walking distance of most homes. In another community in the study, South Central Los Angeles, the mean income was $22,000, and there were no bookstores in the community. Of the study, the two most affluent communities had a minimum of five local bookstores within walking distance of most homes. The four least affluent communities had zero local bookstores, walking distance notwithstanding.

Constantino (2005) indicated while there was no statistically significant differences in access to public library books, there were statistically significant differences between the high and low socioeconomic status (SES) for home, classroom, and school books, $p < .001$, with the students of high SES possessing the greatest number of books. This study further supports the fact that children living at or near the poverty line have less access to reading materials when compared to children who are considered middle class or affluent. Furthermore, Neuman and Celano (2001) found that children from poorer neighborhoods have to actively and intentionally make efforts to obtain reading material. In fact, not only do affluent students have greater access, they have an abundance of books which allow them to enjoy the benefits of reading for pleasure or free reading. (Constantino, 2005). Further illustrating the disadvantages to students of low socioeconomic status, some of the children in the affluent communities studied had more access to books in their home than the other communities had in all of their school sources combined.

Research by Rashid (2005) and reviewed by Bhattacharya (2010) studied how literacy environments in the home influenced the reading achievement of 65 children with reading disabilities. Data obtained from this study indicated that even when reading materials were readily available, a large percentage of the children did not engage in reading or reading activities. The results of the studies showed that the link between access to books in the home and reading achievement was not as strong as the link between parent participation in reading activities and achievement. The researchers hypothesized that the weak relationship between children's reading achievement may stem from below average reading levels of the children, less paired reading between the parents and children, and below average reading abilities of the parents. The results of the study suggested that reading achievement is positively related not only to access to literature in the home, but also to parents who value reading as shown by providing

time and attention to reading activities. According to Bond (2011), literacy, much like money, is passed down from generation to generation.

Eamon (2002) studied the effects of poverty on the reading achievement of adolescents aged 12 through 14. She hypothesized that poverty affected reading achievement because of the limitations of the parents to provide a cognitively stimulating and emotionally supportive environment. In her study, she considered the level of the mother's education, the mother's age at childbirth, as well as the number of parents and children in the home. She found that poverty did affect reading achievement due to a lack of cognitively stimulating activities and materials. Additionally, she found students living in poverty had less emotional support from their parents as consistent economic pressures limit the parents' ability and energy to provide educationally stimulating conversation and emotional and academic support.

Cunningham (2006) analyzed data from six schools that had large low SES populations and high levels of literacy achievement. Cunningham identified factors for high literacy achievement as assessment, community involvement, comprehensive curriculum, student engagement, instruction, leadership, materials, parent participation, perseverance and persistence, professional development, real reading and writing, and specialist support. Of these factors, the six schools ranked high on only student engagement and real reading and writing. The six schools had performed better than expected on literacy achievement because of high levels of student engagement with literacy activities. The students also spent time participating in a guided reading program based on self-selected reading materials during an after school program.

Schools that provide a well maintained library and a professional librarian can be the providers of both print material and the cognitive and emotional support to which low SES

students need access (Subel, 2016). Chiaet (2013) researched the possibility of a connection between reading fiction and building empathy. In the study, three groups of participants were classified by those who read nonfiction, those who read genre fiction, and those who read literary fiction. The results indicated a significant difference in the ability to empathize in the group who read literary fiction. The researchers concluded that since literary fiction focuses on the psychology of character development and character relationships, students gain emotional and psychological awareness that carries over into the real world. For students from high poverty homes who lack emotional support, reading fiction may provide an awareness of positive relationships and character traits that they may not witness at home.

Research shows that access to a library is a good predictor of reading scores, with the size of the school library being the most important predictor of reading scores (Elley, 1992; Krashen, 2004). According to Allen (2006), poor children in general are reading approximately three times less than their middle class or affluent peers. Not only are children in poor communities being denied the access to books that will help them become proficient readers, but they are being denied the opportunity to develop a love of reading. Literacy development is becoming a privilege reserved for the most affluent children rather than a right for all children.

In research lead by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), fourth graders in multiple countries are assessed in the language of their country and are of comparable difficulty levels. According to the data from this research, the strongest predictor of reading achievement among ten year olds is socioeconomic status. (Krashen, 2013). Socioeconomic status is a stronger predictor than independent reading time, a school library with at least 500 books, and instructional time. However, being classified as low socioeconomic status does not mean a child is resigned to below basic literacy development. Multiple studies have shown that

access to libraries can compensate for the effects of poverty on literacy development (Gordon, Lu, & Todd, 2011).

Achievement in Literacy and Literacy Pedagogy

According to Krashen (2013), almost all of our language competence is a result of understanding input, and nearly all of our competence in academic language is the result of reading, and acquisition of grammar is directly related to how much reading a child has done. Krashen (1993, 2004) used a variety of reading research to support the simple claim that one cannot learn to read unless one actually reads books. Miller (2009) also advocated that students read large quantities of books, but she cautioned against using the books to measure comprehension in the form of a comprehensive test. She expressed that there is little to no evidence that teaching and learning occurred when students are faced with a cycle of reading for comprehensive assessment. Miller differentiated between reading for assessment and reading for motivation by explaining that reading for a performance goal does not motivate students beyond the assignment or test. Encouraging students to read for extrinsic rewards is short lived and may actually reduce the amount of reading students do outside of school. Furthermore, shifting the purpose for reading toward memorization keeps students from full engagement with a book and instead keeps the cognizant of an impending assessment causing them to read at surface level and look for parts of the book they predict they will be assessed on at a later date.

Killingsworth and Killingsworth (2010) posited that within the Executive Summary and Overview of the No Child Behind legislation, there is a clear difference in the references between “literature rich environments” and “instructional materials.” The Reading First guidelines did not specifically refer to the significance of a teachers’ knowledge of children’s

literature, rather the focus was on how students could learn the five foundational pillars by interacting with instructional materials. Likewise, there were no references or acknowledgements made to the tremendous impact of free reading. Killingsworth and Killingsworth also noted that, even though a frequent reference to the word “books”, the connection was always to the long term goal rather than the goal of actually using books to teaching reading and practice or enhance reading instruction.

Miller (2009) explained that standardized testing has caused memorization, drilling, and test taking strategies to be prioritized over reading for deep instruction. She argued that these assessment tricks do not transfer to any reading situation other than assessment reading and therefore do not prepare students for any reading they must do beyond the test. Miller advocated that the endless practice of reading for test preparation purposes is what causes students to hate reading.

With the No Child Left Behind legislation (2002) accountability through high stakes testing was established to address low student achievement. For literacy in early grades, that meant reverting back to teaching the five foundational pillars, primarily with phonics based instruction. Grunwald (2006) argued that this phonics based instruction from the five foundational pillars was only addressed using certain assessments, textbooks, workbooks, or software, some of which seemed to profit the authors of Reading First themselves.

For fourth through twelfth grade students, a focus on reading comprehension and remediation strategies became the priority. However, according to scores reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reading scores remained virtually stagnant for fourth graders from 2002 to 2005, and revealed a significant decline in reading

scores at the 8th grade level (O'Neill, 2005). As no improvement remained evident through 2011, educators and policymakers began to again question effective literacy practices.

In the spring of the 2016-2017 school year, Tennessee language arts teachers and district leaders were provided with state training on the revised Tennessee State Standards that were to be implemented in the 2017-2018 school year. These new standards were another change from the previous adoption of the common core standards (2010 through 2017), which were different from the previous State Performance Indicator standards (SPIs) in 2009. In this latest development in language arts standards, the Tennessee State Standards share many commonalities with the Common Core standards. The key shifts remained unchanged as did the focus on text complexity and the mantra that students should "read about it, talk about it, write about it" (Tennessee State Standards for English Language Arts, 2017, p3). However, there is a greater focus on the integrated nature of language arts skills and standards. To support this connection, the state of Tennessee formatted the language arts standards in a spiral document to show how the various academic facets and strands link together to create quality literacy instruction. The introduction to the state standards states, "…but only when all of the standards are fused together do we have a strong structure" (Tennessee State Standards for English Language Arts, 2017, p3). This vision to blend the facets of literacy is necessary for students to truly become masterful readers. For example, students in sixth grade have the following standards for integrating knowledge and ideas in fiction and nonfiction texts respectively:

> 6.RL.IKI.9 – Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.
>
> 6.RI.IKI.9 – Compare and contrast two or more authors' presentation of the same topic or event.

Corwin (2017) explained that for students to begin unpacking the requirements of the literature standard (6.RL.IKI.9), they must have a solid understanding of genre, theme, author's craft and purpose, characterization and other literary elements. Students will not know with what to compare from one text to another without mastery and prior knowledge of the previous standards, including the scaffold standards in grades kindergarten through fifth grade per the design of the standards. For students to approach the informational standard (6.RI.IKI.9), they will need the analytical ability to compare and contrast author's purpose. They will also need to identify the subtle nuances in an author's craft that reveal implied meaning or a specific tone. Mastering 6.RI.IKI.9 is not possible for students who have yet achieved mastery on standards 6.RI.IKI.1 through 6.RI.IKI.8, which also stemmed from knowledge of informational texts taught in kindergarten through fifth grade.

The introduction to the Tennessee English Language Arts Standards also addresses the need for text based instruction and states, "Linking standards signal that planning for instruction needs to begin with a high quality text and that planning decisions with the standards center on the selection(s)" (Tennessee State Standards for English Language Arts, 2017, p2). Everything in the English Language Arts classroom must be taught using a text. State training reminds all teachers that choosing the wrong text is a deal breaker and will negatively impact everything around it (Corwin, 2017). With these state directives, the librarian and school library are more important than ever in literacy instruction.

Another key change in Tennessee's revision to the common core was the elimination of the common core "Language" strand in grades K through 5 (Corwin, 2017). Those standards were rewritten and absorbed into the "Foundational K-5 Literacy Standards" strand. Educators are hopeful that this change will bring more attention to the importance of foundational literacy

and the divide between skills and standards will narrow. It is in this strand where the five foundational reading pillars of early literacy, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension are documented, but separated from the K-5 reading literature and reading informational standards.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The issue of whether there is a significant difference in the reading proficiency and language arts achievement scores of fifth and sixth grade students who are provided regular access to the school library with regard to socioeconomic status was addressed in this study. The study focused on the language arts proficiency levels on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) results and Curriculum Based Measurement (Easy CBM) assessment. Comparisons were made between groups of students who were provided with intentional class time for school library checkouts. These class library visits comprised 30 minutes, or one third, of the 90 minute English Language Arts block for fifth and sixth grade students. During the class visit, the English Language Arts teacher and full time librarian assisted students in checking out books based on their genre preference, content or plot interests, and reading level.

Comparisons were also made between students of low socioeconomic status and other students. Fifth and sixth grade students were chosen because they are intermediate grade levels with fifth grade classified in the 3rd through 5th elementary grade band and sixth grade classified in the 6th through 8th grade band of the middle school classification as determined by the assessment rubrics and blueprints from Tennessee Department of Education for the 2016-2017 school year. Included in this chapter are: The Research Questions and Null Hypotheses, Population, Data Collection, and Data Analysis.

A quantitative framework was used to examine the possible correlation among access to books, socioeconomic status, and fifth and sixth grade reading achievement scores. A quasi-

experimental design was selected because the data already existed and collecting additional data was unnecessary.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

The following research questions and corresponding null hypotheses were considered during the study. The independent variables in the following questions were library access and socioeconomic status. The dependent variable in each question was the students' Easy CBM score and the students' proficiency levels on the TCAP language arts test.

Research Question 1

Is there a significant correlation in the number of books checked out and the amount of library access?

H_01_1: There is no significant correlation in the number of books checked out and the amount of library access.

H_01_2: There is no significant correlation in the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and the amount of library access.

H_01_3: There is no significant correlation in the number of books checked out by students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals and the amount of library access.

Research Question 2

Is there a significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student checks out from the school library?

H_02_1: There is no significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student checks out from the school library.

$H_0 2_2$: There is no significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books students who qualified for free or reduced meals checked out from the school library.

$H_0 2_3$: There is no significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals checked out from the school library.

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

$H_0 3$: There is no significant difference between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals.

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference between the Easy CBM scores for students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

$H_0 4$: There is no significant difference between the Easy CBM scores for students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals.

Population

The population was the fifth and sixth grade students at the intermediate school in an East Tennessee urban school district. The district is currently at 33.8% free or reduced meals population. During the 2016-2017 school year, the school studied had a 36.2% free or reduced

meals population. This study included all fifth and sixth graders from the district who took the final Easy CBM reading assessment in 2016 and 2017.

The 2016-2017 Tennessee Department of Education Report Card indicated the district served 11 schools with a total of 7,981 students. The average daily attendance rate for students in kindergarten through eighth grade was 95.6%, and the average daily attendance rate for students in grades 9-12 was 94.5%. The demographics of the student body of the district consisted of approximately 5,675 (71.1%), White, 1,208 (15.1%) Black or African American, 779 (9.8%) Hispanic or Latino, 283 (3.5%) Asian, and 26 (0.3%) Native American or Alaskan. The district has approximately 1,121 (14%) of students with disabilities, 434 (5.4%) English Learner Students, and 2,713 (33.9%) economically disadvantaged students. The per pupil expenditures totaled $10,282.00 for the 2016-2017 school year (TDOE, 2017).

Based on the 2016 United States Census Bureau, the city of Johnson City reported 22.3% families living below the poverty level. The population reported by the city in the 2016 census was 63, 152. Of those aged 18 to 24 years, only 4.4% had less than a high school diploma. Of the population 25 years and over, 10.1% did not finish high school. Based on the percent of population 25 to 34 years, 89.9% were high school graduates, 48.6% had a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Cenusus Bureau, 2016).

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was the 2016-2017 Easy CBM data. During the 2016-2017 school year, the Easy CBM universal reading screener assessment was administered in the fall, winter, and spring. The scores were used to monitor reading comprehension risk throughout the school year. The building principal provided the assessment results for the spring

administration of the assessment. Additional data from Student Performance reports in PowerSchool Assessment and Analytics were also provided by the building principal for identifying socioeconomic status. Data from Library Media Center class visit logs and Destiny student checkout logs were provided by the school librarian.

The Easy CBM is administered to all students three times per school year and is used to assess the foundational reading skill of comprehension. The scores from this assessment determine whether a child receives additional reading support through Response to Intervention (RTI, Appendix C). All students receive Tier 1 support which is comprised of high quality instruction in the general English Language Arts class. For approximately 10-15% of students who fall below the 25th percentile in basic reading skills, Tier 2 support is provided beyond the time spent in the general English Language Arts class. For the approximate 3-5% of students who are below the 10th percentile in basic reading skills, Tier 3 intensive intervention is provided. As the Easy CBM screener is administered each quarter, students may qualify for placement in different support tiers depending on the level of risk indicated by the results of the assessment. From a possible 20 points, the levels of risk are categorized as: 14-20 points (low risk), 9-13 points (some risk), 1-8 points (high risk). Students who are considered high risk will be placed in Tier 3 intervention, while students who are considered some risk will be provided with Tier 2 intervention. Students may move among tiers throughout the school year depending on their screener results.

Data Collection

After submitting a request to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to collect TCAP and Easy CBM data from an East Tennessee school district, I obtained permission from

the Supervisor of Elementary Education and Superintendent to collect data in the specific school (Appendix B). The IRB determined my proposed research did not require involving human subjects, and permission was granted to continue the study (Appendix A). The deidentified data were collected from the building principal and school librarian. The principal obtained data from Easy CBM websites as well as PowerSchool Assessment and Analytics. The Easy CBM website reports contain the scoring information from the universal screener and classify the results by Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension (MCRC). The PowerSchool Assessment and Analytics report were used to verify the correct students in each class. The librarian provided the number of books checked out by each student as well as the number of times the student was taken to the library by his or her language arts teacher.

All students enrolled in the school are required to take the Easy CBM Universal screener. No names of teachers or students were included in the study. No individual was harmed or experienced any consequences from the conclusions of the study.

Data Analysis

A series of Pearson r correlation tests were used to assess the degree that the number of books checked out, amount of library access, and Easy CBM scores were related. The variables were linearly related for the population. An independent t tests was used to compare the number of books checked out between students who qualify for free and reduced lunch and students who do not qualify. An independent t test was also used to compare Easy CBM scores between students who qualify for free and reduced lunch and students who do not qualify. All data were analyzed at the .05 level of significance.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Chapter 4 describes the results after analysis of the research questions presented in Chapters 1 and 3. This study was conducted to determine if there is was a significant correlation in the number of books a student checkouts and the number of library visits provided by the English language arts teachers, as well as to determine if there was a significant correlation in the number of books a student checks out from the school library and reading comprehension scores. The study also sought to determine if there was a difference between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced lunch and students who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch, as well as to determine if there was a difference between reading comprehension scores for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch and students who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch.

A specific purpose of this study was to gather evidence of a significant difference in reading comprehension levels when factors of access to books and socioeconomic status were considered. The dependent variable was the reading comprehension score of fifth and sixth grade students on the Easy CBM universal screener during the last quarter of the 2016-2017 school year. The independent variables were the number of books checked out by the students, the number of times the students were taken to the library by their language arts teacher during the language arts instructional block, and the socioeconomic status of the fifth and sixth grade students.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1

Is there a significant correlation in the number of books checked out and the amount of library access?

$H_0 1_1$: There is no significant correlation in the number of books checked out by students and the amount of library access.

A Pearson *r* correlation was conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation in the proportional distribution for number of books checked out by students whose teachers provide them with school library access during the language arts block and students whose teachers do not provide them with school library access during the language arts block. The results of the test yielded a positive, significant correlation, $r(1002) = .301$, $p < .001$. Therefore the null hypotheses was rejected. Results indicated that students who have more library access tend to check out more books. This significant correlation suggests that fifth and sixth grade students who are expected to visit the school library on their own time will not check out as many library books as those students whose are scheduled to visit the library with their teacher. Table 1 shows the correlation between the number of books checked out by students and the number of class library visits provided by the language arts teacher.

Table 1

Correlations for Number of Books Checked Out and Number of Class Library Visits

		Checkouts	Number of Visits
Checkouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.301**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	1002	1002

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

$H_0 1_2$: There is no significant correlation in the number of books checked out by students who qualified for free or reduced meals whose teachers and the amount of library access.

A Pearson *r* correlation test was conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation in the proportional distribution for number of books checked out by students who qualified for free or reduced meals whose teachers provided them with school library access during the language arts block. The results of the test yielded a positive, significant correlation, $r(354) = .347$, $p < .001$. Therefore the null hypotheses was rejected. This significant correlation indicates that fifth and sixth grade students who qualify for free and reduced meals and are expected to visit the school library on their own time will not check out as many library books as those students who qualify for free and reduced meals who have library access provided by their teacher. Table 2 shows the correlation between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free and reduced meals and the number of class library visits provided by the language arts teacher.

Table 2

Correlations for Number of Books Checked Out by Students Who Qualify for Free and Reduced Meals and Number of Class Library Visits

		Checkouts	Number of Visits
Checkouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.347**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	354	354

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

$H_0 1_3$: There is no significant correlation in the number of books checked out by students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals and the amount of library access.

A Pearson *r* correlation test was conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation in the proportional distribution for number of books checked out by students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals whose teachers provide them with school library access. The results of the test yielded a positive, significant correlation, $r(648) = .280$, $p < .001$. Therefore the null hypotheses was rejected. This significant correlation indicates that fifth and sixth grade students who do not qualify for free and reduced meals and are expected to visit the school library on their own time will not check out as many library books as they would if provided with library access time from their teacher. Table 3 shows the correlation between the number of books checked out by students who do not qualify for free and reduced meals and the number of class library visits provided by the language arts teacher.

Table 3

Correlations for Number of Books Checked Out by Students Who Do Not Qualify for Free and Reduced Meals and Number of Class Library Visits

		Checkouts	Number of Visits
Checkouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.280**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	648	648

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 2

Is there a significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student checks out from the school library?

H_02_1: There is no significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student checks out from the school library.

A Pearson *r* correlation test was conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student checks out from the school library. The results of the test yielded a positive, significant correlation, $r(1002) = .073$, $p = .021$. Therefore the null hypotheses was rejected. Fifth and sixth grade students who check out more library books from the school library tend to have a higher Easy CBM reading comprehension score. Table 4 shows the correlation between the number of books checked out by students and the Easy CBM reading comprehension score.

Table 4

Correlations for Number of Books Checked Out by Students and Easy CBM Reading Comprehension Score (MCRC – Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension)

		Checkouts	MCRC
Checkouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.073**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021
	N	1002	1002

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

$H_0 2_2$: There is no significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books students who qualified for free or reduced meals checked out from the school library.

A Pearson *r* correlation was conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books students who qualified for free or reduced meals checked out from the school library. The results of the test yielded a positive but not a significant correlation, $r(354) = .022$, $p = .684$. The null hypotheses was retained due to the level of significance. Students who qualified for free or reduced lunch and check out more library books from the school library tend to have slightly, but not significantly, higher Easy CBM reading comprehension scores. Table 5 shows the correlation between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and their Easy CBM reading comprehension score.

Table 5

Correlations for Number of Books Checked Out by Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced Meals and Easy CBM Reading Comprehension Score (MCRC – Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension)

		Checkouts	MCRC
Checkouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.684
	N	354	354

$H_0 2_3$: There is no significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals checked out from the school library.

A Pearson *r* correlation was conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student who does not qualify for free or reduced meals checks out from the school library. The results of the test yielded a positive, significant correlation, $r(648) = .0100$, $p = .011$. Therefore the null hypotheses was rejected. This significant correlation indicates that fifth and sixth grade students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals and check out more library books from the school library tend to have higher Easy CBM reading comprehension scores. Table 6 shows the correlation between the number of books checked out by students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals and the Easy CBM reading comprehension scores.

Table 6

Correlations for Number of Books Checked Out by Students Who Do Not Qualify for Free or Reduced Meals and Easy CBM Reading Comprehension Score (MCRC – Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension)

		Checkouts	MCRC
Checkouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.100*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	648	648

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

$H_0$3: There is no significant difference between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean amount of books checked out differ by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and those who do not. The number of books checked out from the school library was the test variable and the grouping variable was the eligibility for free or reduced meals (SES). The test was significant, $t(1002) = .831$, $p = .028$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students who qualified for free or reduced meals ($M = 14.24$), $SD = 15.48$) tended to check out significantly fewer books than those students who did not qualify for free or reduced meals ($M = 15.15$), $SD = 16.99$). Figure 1 shows the distributions for the two groups.

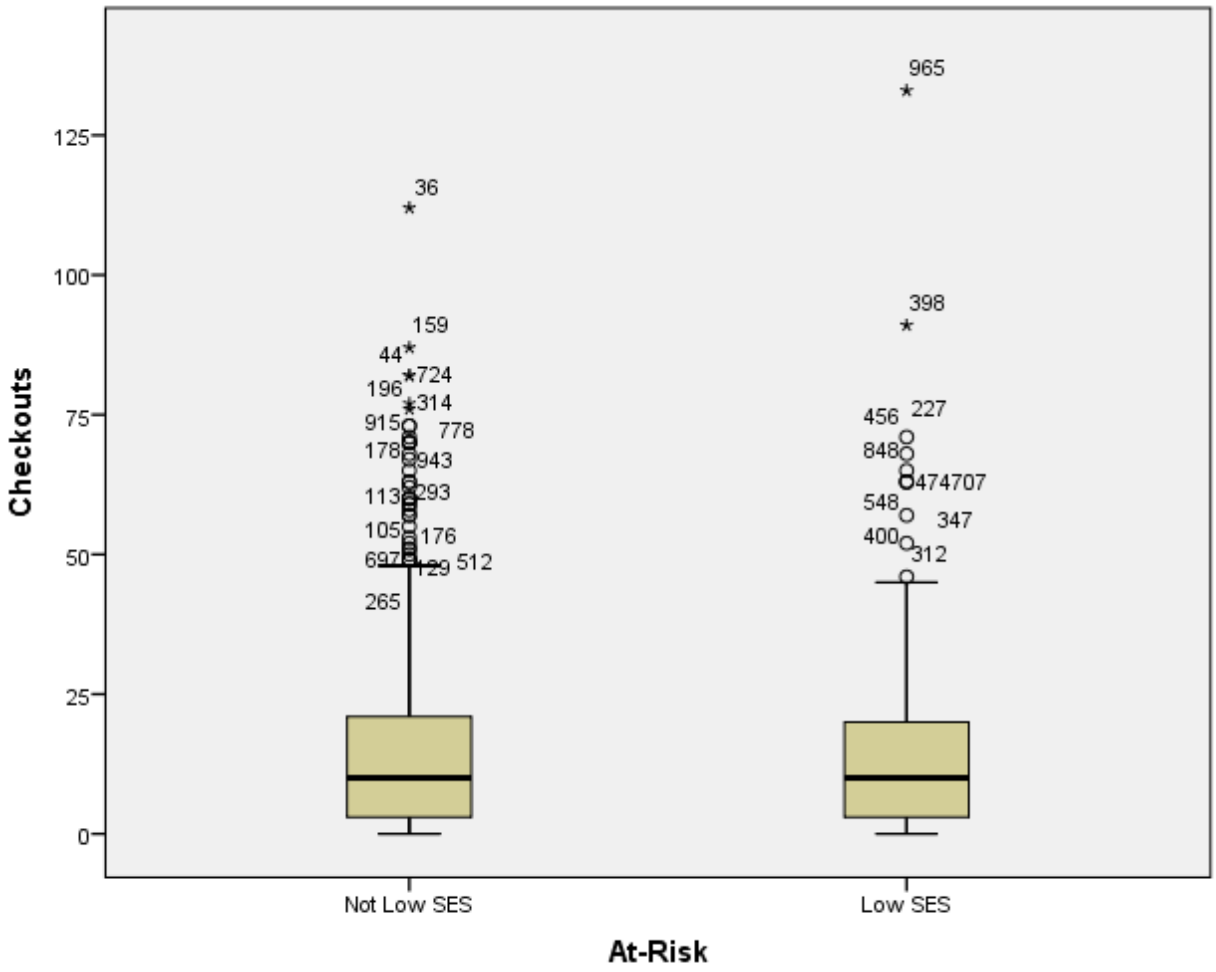

Figure 1. Distribution of number of books checked out by students who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch and students who do qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference between the Easy CBM scores for students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

$H_0$4: There is no significant difference between the Easy CBM scores for students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean Easy CBM reading comprehension score differed between students who qualify for free or reduced meals and those who do not. The Easy CBM score (MCRC) was the test variable and the grouping

variable was the eligibility for free or reduced meals (SES). The test was significant, $t(1002) = 7.11$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students who qualified to receive free or reduced meals ($M = 14.12$), $SD = 3.21$) tended to score significantly lower than those who did not qualify to receive free or reduced meals ($M = 15.44$), $SD = 2.56$). Figure 2 shows the distributions for the two groups.

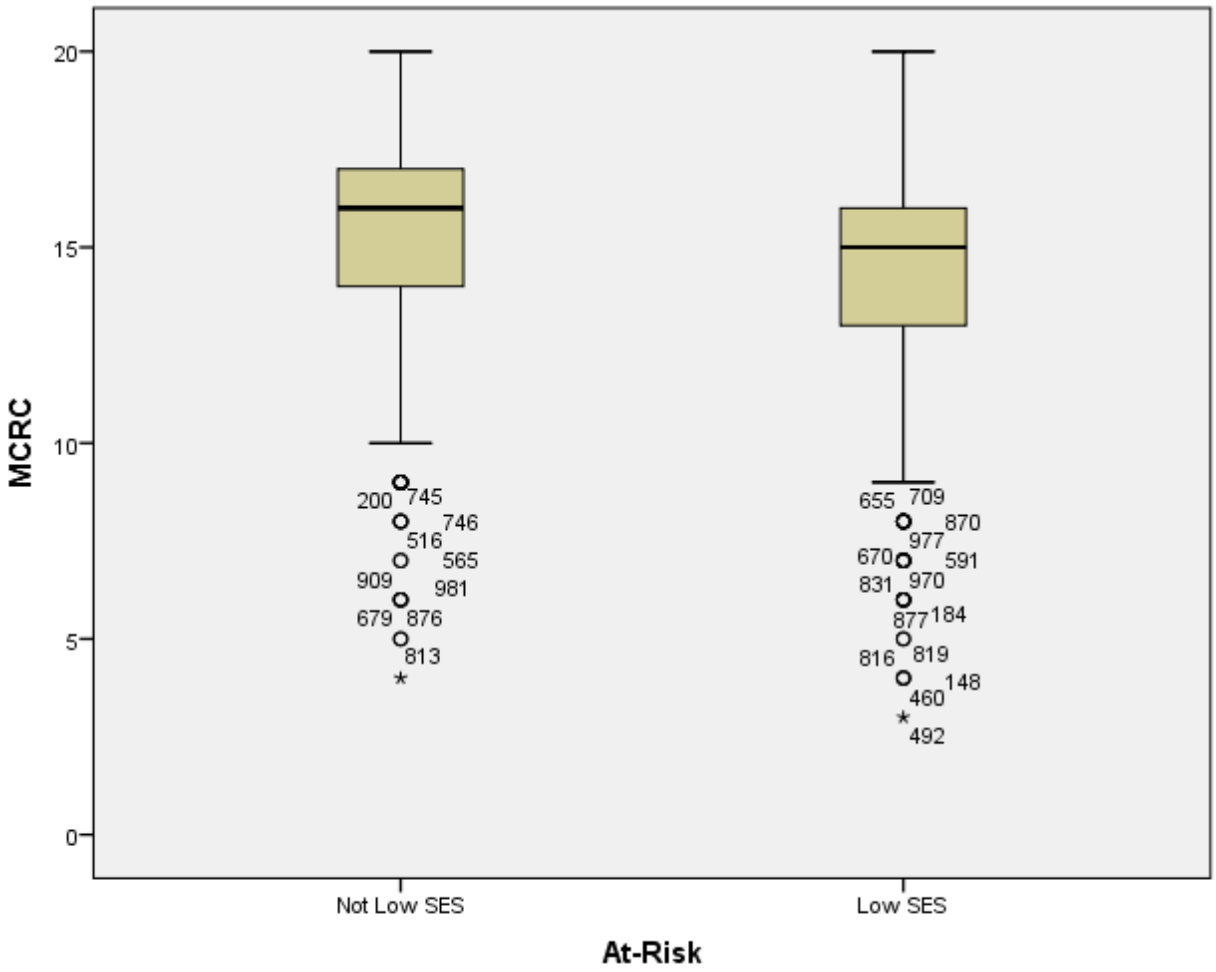

Figure 2. Distribution of reading comprehension scores of students who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch and students who do qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Chapter Summary

A series of Pearson *r* correlations were conducted to evaluate the relation between library access in regards to socioeconomic status and reading comprehension. Statistically significant results were reported for all but one of the variables. In general, students whose teachers provide access to the school library during the language arts instructional block checked out more books than students whose teachers did not provide scheduled class time for taking students to the school library. Furthermore, regarding the overall student population, students who checked out more library books tended to have higher reading comprehension scores on the Easy CBM reading assessment.

Two independent-samples t tests were run to evaluate the difference between students who qualified for free or reduced meals and students who did not qualify for free or reduced meals in regards to library checkout numbers and Easy CBM reading assessment scores. Students who did qualify for free or reduced meals tended to check out fewer books than students who did not qualify for free or reduced meals. Additionally, students who did not qualify for free or reduced meals tended to have higher scores on the Easy CBM reading assessment than those students who did qualify for free or reduced meals.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The achievement gap between students who receive free or reduced meals benefits and students who do not is ever widening. The purpose of this study was to examine the research on a potential reading comprehension gap as measured by the Easy CBM assessment with fifth and sixth grade students with regard to access to books and socioeconomic status.

This study found significant correlations between the reading achievement scores and number of books checked out for 1,002 fifth and sixth grade students who were assessed on the Easy CBM universal screener during the 2016-2017 school year. The dependent variable was the reading comprehension score. The independent variables were socioeconomic status (students who qualified for free or reduced meals and students who did not qualify), number of library books checked out by the student, and number of class library visit opportunities of each student's language arts teacher. The reading comprehension score ranged from 1 to 20 points in evaluating the risk for low reading comprehension. The levels of risk are categorized as: 14 to 20 points (low risk), 9 to 13 points (some risk), 1 to 8 points (high risk). The research questions in Chapters 1 and 3 guided the statistical analyses of the data.

Research Questions and Findings

Research Question 1

Is there a significant correlation in the number of books checked out and the amount of library access?

The results of the Pearson *r* test that were analyzed to determine the relation between the number of books checked out by students and the amount of library access were significant. Students who are provided with library access time tend to check out more books. Teachers who do not provide students with school library access during the instructional block often cite lack of time as a reason not to take their students. The results of this test support research by Krashen (2013) who argued the importance of providing students with access to texts to improve independent reading. In his 2004 research, Krashen revealed that students who did not have a school library read approximately half the number of books per week as student who did have a school library. While all students in this study do have a school library, the students who do not have a teacher willing to allot instructional time for independent reading are less likely to check out books on their own.

In analyzing the data for students who qualify for free or reduced meals, the results indicate that these students take full advantage of the opportunity to check out books from the library when they are provided with access. Neuman and Celano (2001) found that students who live in poorer neighborhoods have to actively and intentionally make efforts to obtain reading material. Students who qualify for free or reduced meals and who do not have a language arts teacher who will take them to the library, must take responsibility to come to the library on their own before school officially starts for the day. However, this early morning time is also when breakfast is served, so students who qualify for free or reduced meals would have to decide whether to spend their time eating breakfast or selecting a book from the library.

Research Question 2

Is there a significant correlation between the Easy CBM reading comprehension score and the number of books a student checks out from the school library?

The results of the Pearson *r* that were analyzed to determine a relation between the Easy CBM reading score with the number of books checked out from the school library were significant. In looking at all fifth and sixth grade students in the study, there was a positive correlation in number of books checked out and Easy CBM reading comprehension score. Though not statistically significant, there was a positive correlation in students who qualify for free and reduced meals in regards to their number of checkouts and Easy CBM reading comprehension scores. However, the positive correlation was significant in the overall student population and the Easy CBM reading comprehension scores. The data indicate that in general, students who have more access to the library and who checkout books are more likely to achieve a higher score (i.e. lower risk) on their reading comprehension as measured by the Easy CBM.

These results support the Scholastic Inc. (2008) study that declared students who have access to a school library with a full time librarian increase their likelihood of scoring average or above average on state tests. Additionally, Miller (2009) claimed that students who are encouraged to read for personal interest and motivation will grow their reading skills more than students who read for the purpose of completing an assignment or passing an assessment. She argued that students who read only for an assignment or assessment generally read for a surface level understanding and look for parts of the book they predict they will be assessed on at a later date. Miller argued that if authentic reading is supported, then true reading comprehension will grow. The results of this study support her claim that students who participate in self-selected reading will improve their reading comprehension.

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference between the number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

The results of the independent-samples t test indicated a significant difference between the average number of books checked out by students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals. The data indicate that students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals check out more books than those who do qualify for free or reduced meals. Overall, the data indicate that when provided the opportunity for checking out school library books, most students will do so regardless of socioeconomic status.

The results of the data from this test revealed that students who qualify for free or reduced meals are still at a disadvantage when obtaining reading materials as compared to their peers who do not qualify for free or reduced meals. This analysis supports research by Celano (2001) who found that children from poorer neighborhoods have to actively and intentionally make efforts to obtain reading material. As mentioned in the analysis of Research Question 1, many of the students who qualify for free or reduced meals and are not taken to the library by their teacher, must choose between breakfast or visiting the library. The results of this study also support Constantino's (2005) claim that affluent students have greater opportunities to obtain print material than their peers. Students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals may have the benefit of eating breakfast at their homes which would allow them to have morning time to visit the library and check out more books.

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference between the Easy CBM scores for students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals?

The results of the independent-samples t test indicate a significant difference between the average Easy CBM score for students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals. On average, students who do not qualify for free or

reduced meals score higher than students who do qualify for free or reduced meals. This number is similar to the difference in number of checkouts between students who qualify for free or reduced meals and students who do not as stated in Research Question 3. In short, students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals check out one more book and achieve one more point on their reading assessment. While this may seem like a small advantage, it is enough to warrant which tier of RTI support a student receives (Appendix C). Students receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 support receive intervention outside of the regular classroom and generally have to replace a related arts such as physical education or music with the additional academic support time.

These results further support the research in Chapter 2 which identify the disadvantages students who live in poverty have regarding access to literature and reading ability (Krashen, 2013). The literature and results from this study indicate a strong correlation between access to books and reading comprehension, and it is irresponsible for educators, policymakers, and instructional leaders to ignore the importance of providing all students with the reading material they need to be successful in their lives. Access to books must be a priority for our students of low socioeconomic status as many of them do not have the same opportunities as their affluent peers to read independently. As Stanovich (2017) explained, students who read more become stronger readers which causes further widening of the achievement gap between students who live in poverty and those who do not. We cannot let our students who qualify for free or reduced meals remain even one book behind and one point behind their peers who do not qualify for free or reduced meals.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study aligns with the findings of previous research that providing students with access to print materials will positively impact student reading ability (Krashen, 2013). It is recommended that:

1. The school district in this study continue to collect and analyze data regarding the importance of school library access and its effect on reading achievement.
2. As educators and policymakers seek to implement practices and strategies that will ensure all students regardless of socioeconomic status are successful, special attention should be given to the role of the school library and librarian. With school administrators facing tight budgets, the librarian is often considered to be negotiable (Todd, 2014). However, before even considering a cut to the school library or librarian, it is paramount that schools and districts such as the one in this study analyze the findings of this research and seek out other similar studies. The short term satisfaction of a balanced budget could have lasting and far-reaching consequences on the long term reading development of students.
3. Principals of schools with a full time librarian should evaluate the usage of the library and the services offered by the librarian. The results of the research show a significant positive correlation between the number of books checked out by students and reading comprehension scores. If one teacher provides his or her students opportunity to use the school library and another teacher does not, there is a clear unfair disadvantage to the students who have been assigned to a teacher who does not provide his or her students with school library access.

4. The foundational reading skill of comprehension is crucial to student success with language arts standards and standards of other content areas. Teachers must have support from administrators and librarians in learning about strategies to improve student reading comprehension. Trying to teach other standards without the basic foundation for reading results in frustration for both the student and teacher. A language arts teacher in a state professional development used the analogy of trying to teach Spanish IV to a group of students who have never had Spanish I, II, or III. The urgency to show mastery of state standards cannot take priority over the basic skills needed to acquire knowledge.
5. School system leaders should consider the system's librarians when developing professional development and analyzing reading data. School librarians are professionals who have been trained to instill a love of reading in children (Kachel, 2013). The potential for collaboration with language arts teachers, reading interventionists, and school leaders is limitless.
6. Students who struggle in reading should be placed with English language arts teachers who make scheduled, frequent class visits to the school library. The results of this study indicate a positive, significant correlation between checkout numbers and Easy CBM reading comprehension results. The results also indicate that students will checkout more books if they have an English language arts teacher who schedules class library visits. By providing the struggling readers with more opportunities to visit the library, they may increase their checkout numbers and improve their reading comprehension.

Recommendations for Further Research

Suggestions for further research are as follows:

1. Additional studies spanning more school years and grade levels need to be considered to track the impact of library access on a student's reading comprehension.
2. Additional studies using state testing data (TCAP) need to be considered to track the impact of library access on a student's reading achievement.
3. A mixed methods approach should be used to provide a more in-depth perspective to the value of class library visits for students and teachers, as well as the school librarian.
4. The study should be expanded to include multiple school systems in order to provide a richer data analysis.
5. Future research should address the possibility of economically disadvantaged students not having the money to obtain a new id or pay library fines in order to check out books.

Summary

This study was intended to offer documentation that a relationship exists between school library access and reading comprehension. From these findings, it is clear that increasing school library access can result in increased reading comprehension scores. Students who qualify for free and reduced meals and students who do not have the right to use the resources in their school. Students whose teachers refuse to allocate instructional class time to allow students to use the school library are preventing them from an opportunity that can improve their overall reading ability for the rest of their lives. Principals and school leaders who choose to save money by eliminating library funding or using their librarian for other duties, are preventing their students from participating in an opportunity that can improve their overall reading ability for the

rest of their lives. Student reading comprehension is a nonnegotiable goal when considering preparation for college and career readiness.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: JOHNSON CITY SCHOOLS APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

JOHNSON CITY SCHOOLS
APPROVAL FORM FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

REQUESTOR'S NAME Lor. A. Church

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL The effect of library access on reading achievement

STEP 1: RESEARCH REVIEW OF CURRICULUM DIVISION

___ We temporarily withhold approval of your proposal until you address the questions we have raised about it in the attached letter. (Include this form with re-submission of your proposal.)

___ We conditionally approve your proposal and you may proceed with making contact with principal(s) of the appropriate school(s), but it is necessary for you to address the questions we have raised about your proposal in the attached letter.

X We approve your proposal. Proceed with obtaining approval of the principal(s) of the appropriate school(s).

Signature, Curriculum Division Reviewer — Date: 2/12/18

STEP 2: PRINCIPAL'S EVALUATION

___ I temporarily withhold approval of your proposed research being conducted in my school for reasons stated in the attached correspondence. (Include this form with the re-submission of your proposal.)

PRINCIPAL #1: _____ DATE: _____

PRINCIPAL #2 _____ DATE: _____

PRINCIPAL #3 _____ DATE: _____

✓ I approve your proposal. Please forward this form to the Central Office for approval of the Superintendent.

PRINCIPAL #1 [redacted] DATE: 2-12-18

PRINCIPAL #2 _____ DATE: _____

PRINCIPAL #3 _____ DATE: _____

STEP 3: SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION

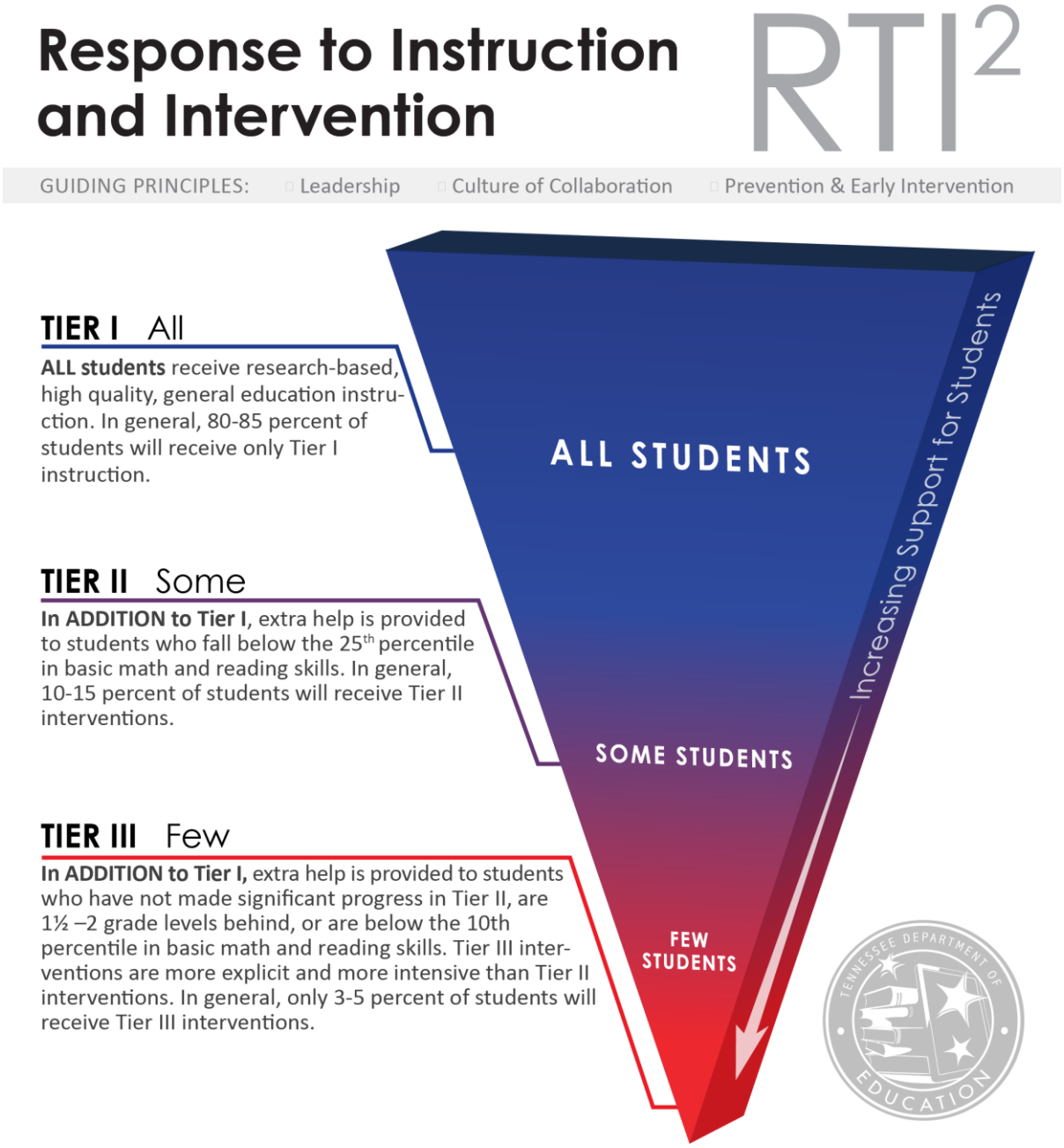
___ I withhold approval of your proposed research being conducted in our schools for the reasons stated in the attached correspondence. I am forwarding a copy of your proposal, a copy of this form, and a copy of our correspondence to the Curriculum Division reviewer. They will communicate with your further.

✓ I approve your proposal. Proceed with your research according to the conditions agreed upon in the preceding sections of this form and your research proposal.

Signature of Superintendent — Date: 02-19-18

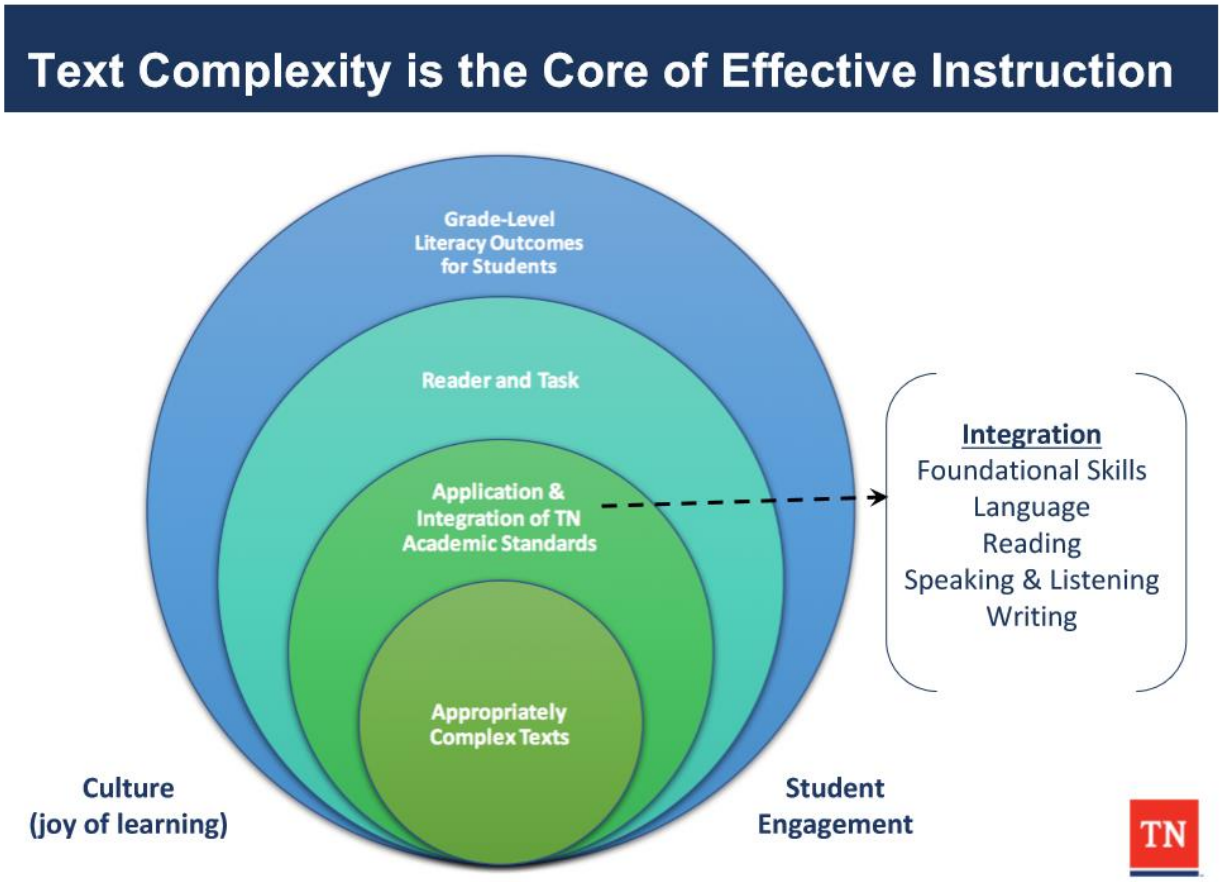
NOTE: The signed copy of this form should be returned to the Curriculum Division for their records.
(Reference: Johnson City Board of Education Policy 4.210)

APPENDIX B: TENNESSEE RTI^2 MODEL



Tennessee Department of Education (https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/special-education/rti/rti2_manual.pdf)

APPENDIX C: TDOE GRAPHIC TEXT COMPLEXITY AND EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION



Corwin, J. (2017). *Textual Analysis: Choosing the right text for instruction and assessment* [PowerPoint slides]. Provided by the Tennessee Department of Education.

APPENDIX D: TDOE TEXT COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS

ACHIEVE THE CORE

What Makes This Text Complex?

1. **Quantitative Measure**
   Go to http://www.lexile.com/ and enter the title of your read aloud text in the Quick Book Search in the upper right of home page. Most texts will have a Lexile, measure in this database. For more information on other valid quantitative measures, click here.

   _____

   Use this chart for quick reference:

2-3 band	420-820L
4-5 band	740-1010L
6-8 band	925-1185L
9-10 band	1050-1335L
11-CCR band	1185-1385L

2. **Qualitative Features**
   Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension, note some examples from the text that make it more or less complex. For more information on these 4 dimensions, click here.

Meaning/Purpose	Structure
Language	Knowledge Demands

3. **Reader and Task Considerations**
   What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?

   How will this text help my students build knowledge about the world?

Corwin, J. (2017). *Textual Analysis: Choosing the right text for instruction and assessment* [PowerPoint slides]. Provided by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Quantitative Measures – Step 2

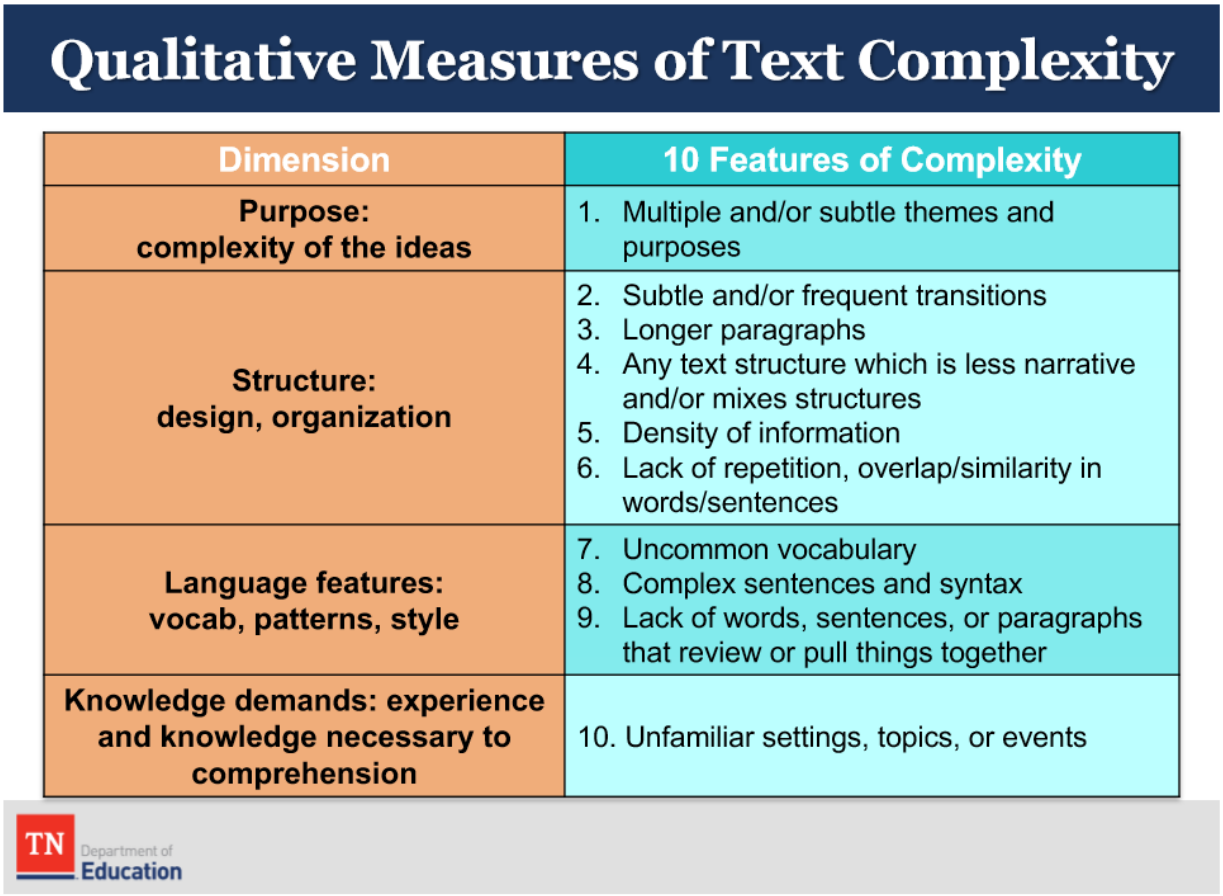
Assessing the Quantitative Quality of the Text using Lexile.com

Grade Band	Current Lexile Band	"Stretch" Lexile Band*
K–1	N/A	N/A
2–3	450L–730L	420L–820L
4–5	640L–850L	740L–1010L
6–8	860L–1010L	925L–1185L
9-10	960L–1120L	1050L–1335L
11–CCR	1070L–1220L	1185L–1385L

TN Department of Education

Corwin, J. (2017). *Textual Analysis: Choosing the right text for instruction and assessment* [PowerPoint slides]. Provided by the Tennessee Department of Education.

APPENDIX F: TDOE QUALITATIVE MEASURES FOR TEXT COMPLEXITY



Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity

Dimension	10 Features of Complexity
Purpose: complexity of the ideas	1. Multiple and/or subtle themes and purposes
Structure: design, organization	2. Subtle and/or frequent transitions 3. Longer paragraphs 4. Any text structure which is less narrative and/or mixes structures 5. Density of information 6. Lack of repetition, overlap/similarity in words/sentences
Language features: vocab, patterns, style	7. Uncommon vocabulary 8. Complex sentences and syntax 9. Lack of words, sentences, or paragraphs that review or pull things together
Knowledge demands: experience and knowledge necessary to comprehension	10. Unfamiliar settings, topics, or events

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APPENDIX G: TDOE QUALITATIVE TEXT COMPLEXITY RUBRIC FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Text Title_____ Text Author_____

	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
TEXT STRUCTURE	○ **Organization:** Connections between an extensive range of ideas, processes or events are deep, intricate and often ambiguous; organization is intricate or discipline-specific ○ **Text Features**: If used, are essential in understanding content ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, intricate, extensive graphics, tables, charts, etc., are extensive are integral to making meaning of the text; may provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text	○ **Organization:** Connections between an expanded range ideas, processes or events are often implicit or subtle; organization may contain multiple pathways or exhibit some discipline-specific traits ○ **Text Features**: If used, directly enhance the reader's understanding of content ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, graphics, tables, charts, etc. support or are integral to understanding the text	○ **Organization:** Connections between some ideas or events are implicit or subtle; organization is evident and generally sequential or chronological ○ **Text Features**: If used, enhance the reader's understanding of content ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, graphic, pictures, tables, and charts, etc. are mostly supplementary to understanding the text	○ **Organization:** Connections between ideas, processes or events are explicit and clear; organization of text is chronological, sequential or easy to predict ○ **Text Features**: If used, help the reader navigate and understand content but are not essential to understanding content. ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, graphic, pictures, tables, and charts, etc. are simple and unnecessary to understanding the text but they may support and assist readers in understanding the written text
LANGUAGE FEATURES	○ **Conventionality**: Dense and complex; contains considerable abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Complex, generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly complex sentences with several subordinate clauses or phrases and transition words; sentences often contains multiple concepts	○ **Conventionality**: Fairly complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Fairly complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words	○ **Conventionality**: Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning ○ **Vocabulary:** Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Primarily simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions	○ **Conventionality**: Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand ○ **Vocabulary:** Contemporary, familiar, conversational language ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly simple sentences
PURPOSE	○ **Purpose:** Subtle and intricate, difficult to determine; includes many theoretical or abstract elements	○ **Purpose:** Implicit or subtle but fairly easy to infer; more theoretical or abstract than concrete	○ **Purpose:** Implied but easy to identify based upon context or source	○ **Purpose:** Explicitly stated, clear, concrete, narrowly focused
KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on extensive levels of discipline-specific or theoretical knowledge, includes a range of challenging abstract concepts ○ **Intertextuality:** Many references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on moderate levels of discipline-specific or theoretical knowledge; includes a mix of recognizable ideas and challenging abstract concepts ○ **Intertextuality:** Some references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on common practical knowledge and some discipline-specific content knowledge; includes a mix of simple and more complicated, abstract ideas ○ **Intertextuality:** Few references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc	○ **Subject Matter Knowledge:** Relies on everyday, practical knowledge; includes simple, concrete ideas ○ **Intertextuality:** No references or allusions to other texts, or outside ideas, theories, etc.

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APPENDIX H: TDOE QUALITATVE TEXT COMPLEXITY RUBRIC FOR LITERARY TEXTS

Text Complexity: Qualitative Measures Rubric[1]

LITERATURE

Text Title_____ Text Author_____

	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
TEXT STRUCTURE	○ **Organization:** Is intricate with regard to such elements as point of view, time shifts, multiple characters, storylines and detail ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, illustrations or graphics are essential for understanding the meaning of the text	○ **Organization:** May include subplots, time shifts and more complex characters ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, illustrations or graphics support or extend the meaning of the text	○ **Organization:** May have two or more storylines and occasionally be difficult to predict ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, a range of illustrations or graphics support selected parts of the text	○ **Organization:** Is clear, chronological or easy to predict ○ **Use of Graphics:** If used, either illustrations directly support and assist in interpreting the text or are not necessary to understanding the meaning of the text
LANGUAGE FEATURES	○ **Conventionality**: Dense and complex; contains abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Complex, generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly complex sentences with several subordinate clauses or phrases; sentences often contain multiple concepts	○ **Conventionality**: Fairly complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language ○ **Vocabulary:** Fairly complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words	○ **Conventionality**: Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning ○ **Vocabulary:** Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely unfamiliar or overly academic ○ **Sentence Structure:** Primarily simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions	○ **Conventionality**: Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand ○ **Vocabulary:** Contemporary, familiar, conversational language ○ **Sentence Structure:** Mainly simple sentences
MEANING	○ **Meaning:** Multiple competing levels of meaning that are difficult to identify, separate, and interpret; theme is implicit or subtle, often ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text	○ **Meaning:** Multiple levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify or separate; theme is implicit or subtle and may be revealed over the entirety of the text	○ **Meaning:** Multiple levels of meaning clearly distinguished from each other; theme is clear but may be conveyed with some subtlety	○ **Meaning:** One level of meaning; theme is obvious and revealed early in the text.
KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores complex, sophisticated or abstract themes; experiences portrayed are distinctly different from the common reader ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** Many references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores themes of varying levels of complexity or abstraction; experiences portrayed are uncommon to most readers ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** Some references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores several themes; experiences portrayed are common to many readers ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** Few references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	○ **Life Experiences:** Explores a single theme; experiences portrayed are everyday and common to most readers ○ **Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** No references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements

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